

Romans Chapter Four

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Overview

Each chapter of Romans builds upon the points Paul concluded in the previous chapters. Paul had been talking about the actions of animal sacrifices in the previous chapter, “deeds [*ergon* 2041] of the law” (3:20), “By what law? of works [*ergon* 2041]?” (3:27), “without the deeds [*ergon* 2041] of the law” (3:28). And the actions of sacrificing animals were Abraham’s actions in this chapter, “For if Abraham were justified by works [*ergon* 2041]” (v. 2). Paul will now use Abraham as his prime example of justification, not by trusting in his actions of animal sacrifices, but by trusting in God’s action of sacrificing His Son.

Abraham’s life is recorded in Genesis chapters 12 through 25. And his walk with God for about 100 of his 175 years isn’t characterized by simply believing or having faith. The statement, “And **he believed** [*āman* 539] in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness” (Gen 15:6), is misleading because of the Hebrew verb *āman* translated as “believed” rather than “committed,” “confirmed,” or “entrusted.” Certainly commitment includes belief, but belief by itself excludes commitment and limits what’s truly being said about Abraham as our example. Nevertheless, Bible translations and preachers have turned Abraham into a great man of belief or faith that we’re to emulate for salvation. This isn’t the gospel message Jesus Christ preached, “For I am not ashamed of **the gospel of Christ**: for it is the power of God unto **salvation** to every one that **believeth** [*commits*]” (1:16). He preached commitment to His name, “**He that believeth** [*commits*] **on** [*eis* 1519] **him** is not condemned: but he that believeth [*commits*] not is condemned already, because he hath not **believed** [*committed*] **in** [*eis* 1519] **the name** of the only begotten Son of God” (Jhn 3:18). It makes no sense to simply *believe in* someone’s name. What makes sense is to *commit to* someone’s name—to everything invested in their name. Salvation is by bowing our knee to the name of Jesus, “That **at the name of Jesus** every knee should bow” (Phl 2:10), committing ourselves and submitting ourselves to the honor of everything He lived and died for.

It’s only when we have the correct context concerning Abraham that we can fully understand Paul’s teaching in this chapter about him. As long as we incorrectly take him for being simply a great man of faith, the thrust of Paul’s message evades our comprehension and understanding. But once we recognize that he was committed to God, “Abraham **believed** [*committed unto*] **God**, and it was counted unto him for righteousness” (v. 3), it’s only then that we begin to get a better grasp on “the gospel of Christ” (1:16).

Furthermore, the plethora of modern preaching about belief and faith has marred our understanding of how God counts or deems us righteous before Him, “Abraham believed [*committed unto*] God, and it was **counted unto him for righteousness**” (v. 3). It wasn’t Abraham’s belief but his strong commitment that God deemed him righteous before Him. We learn this not only from Abraham but also from his descendants, God’s chosen people. They weren’t commanded to believe but to obey, “And the LORD commanded us **to do all these statutes, to fear the LORD our God, for our good always**, that he might preserve us alive, as *it is* at this day. And **it shall be our righteousness**, if we observe to do all these commandments **before the LORD our God**, as he hath commanded us.” (Deu 6:24-25). God gave them an attainable standard of righteousness by which they were to live before Him. And they acknowledged “it shall be our righteousness ... before the LORD our God.” If they feared God and kept His commandments, it would be righteousness to them—He would consider, count,

deem, impute, or reckon them righteous before Him. For His people, righteousness before Him wasn't by faith or belief but by commitment to Him as their God.

Righteousness before God remains the same today. Although God's people now live under the New Covenant, being deemed righteous before Him by commitment hasn't changed. It's still the same as it was with Abraham before either the Old or New Covenants had even been made.

What shall we say then?

“**What shall we say then** that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found?” (v. 1). By beginning his next points with “What shall we say then,” Paul indicated that he was building upon what he had just taught. He's now going to show in the life of Abraham, the principles he had just taught in chapter three. Since the actions of animal sacrifices never justified anyone, then this must include Abraham himself, the father of the Jewish people after the flesh. By showing that the actions of offering animal sacrifices didn't justify their father Abraham, then it's proven that those same actions never justified anyone descended from him either. Furthermore, if those actions didn't justify them descended from Abraham, then they certainly won't justify anyone else either. Abraham now becomes the apex and crucible of Paul's entire argument that justification is by Jesus Christ's faithfulness, and not by the actions of the law.

Our father as pertaining to the flesh

“What shall we say then that **Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh**, hath found?” (v. 1). In a confrontation between Christ and the Pharisees, the Pharisees declared of themselves, “We be Abraham's seed” (Jhn 8:33), and Christ agreed, “I know that ye are Abraham's seed” (Jhn 8:37). However, when claiming Abraham as their father, “Abraham is our father” (Jhn 8:39), He stated that Abraham's children act as he acted, “If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works [*actions*] of Abraham” (Jhn 8:39). Finally, they claimed God as their Father, “we have one Father, *even* God” (Jhn 8:41), to which He set the record straight, “Ye are of *your* father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do” (Jhn 8:44). From what Jesus Christ Himself taught, just being physical descendants of Abraham as the Pharisees were, didn't make them children of God. Children of God do as Abraham did, while children of the devil do the lusts of their father.

Later in his letter, Paul will speak of his biological brethren descended physically from Abraham, “For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for **my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh**” (9:3). But then taught that being “the seed of Abraham” doesn't make anyone children of God, “Neither, because they are **the seed of Abraham, are they all children** ... They which are the children of the flesh, **these are not the children of God**” (9:7,8). As Christ Himself taught, those that do the lusts of the flesh are children of their father the devil.

In specifying “as pertaining to the flesh” when beginning to teach about “Abraham our father,” Paul is identifying the subjects of his teaching in this chapter as the physical descendants of Abraham while not affirming them as children of God. What he will prove here about Abraham will be the basis for many things he will teach later in his letter, particularly that Abraham's children aren't necessarily children of God, “They

which are the children of the flesh, these *are not the children of God*" (9:8), and aren't necessarily saved, "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that **they might be saved**" (10:1).

What did Abraham find?

"What shall we say then that **Abraham** our father, as pertaining to the flesh, **hath found?**" (v. 1). That Abraham found something implies he had been doing something wrong but then learned to do it right. After being called out of his home country into the land he would be given, he continued to walk in his former pagan ways of building altars and offering animal sacrifices. He was trying to worship the true God in a way He wouldn't accept: "there **he builded an altar** unto the LORD, and **called upon the name of the LORD**" (Gen 12:7-8); "Unto the place of **the altar**, which he had made there at the first: and there Abram **called on the name of the LORD**" (Gen 13:3-4); "Then Abram removed *his* tent, and came and dwelt in the plain of Mamre, which *is* in Hebron, and **built there an altar** unto the LORD" (Gen 13:18).

Jesus Christ taught, "But the hour cometh, and now is, when **the true worshippers** shall worship the Father in spirit [*breath*] and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God *is* a Spirit [*breath*]: and they that worship him **must worship him in spirit [*breath*] and in truth.**" (Jhn 4:23-24). And Paul wrote, "For we are the circumcision, which **worship God in the spirit [*breath*], and rejoice in Christ Jesus**, and have no confidence in the flesh" (Phl 3:3). The true worshippers, worship God the Father in a broken and contrite breath, and rejoice in the commandments and teaching of His Son Jesus Christ. He taught, "Blessed *are* **the poor in spirit [*breath*]:** for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Mat 5:3). A certain scribe said to Him, "And to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love *his* neighbour as himself, **is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices**" (Mar 12:33), to which He affirmed, "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God" (Mar 12:34). To love God with all the heart and to love our neighbor as ourselves in brokenness of breath is truly worshipping the true God.

David wrote, "The LORD *is* nigh unto them that are of **a broken heart;** and saveth such as be of **a contrite spirit [*breath*]**" (Psa 34:18), "**For thou desirest not sacrifice;** else would I give *it*: thou delightest not in burnt offering. **The sacrifices of God *are* a broken spirit [*breath*]:** a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." (Psa 51:16-17). And Isaiah wrote, "For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name *is* Holy; I dwell in the high and holy *place*, with him also *that is* of **a contrite and humble spirit [*breath*],** to revive the spirit [*breath*] of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones" (Isa 57:15), "but to this *man* will I look, *even* to *him that is* **poor and of a contrite spirit [*breath*],** and trembleth at my word" (Isa 66:2).

Abraham's actions

"For if Abraham were justified by works [*ergon* 2041], he hath *whereof* to glory; but not before God" (v. 2). The first time we're told of the Lord ever speaking to Abraham was, "**Now the LORD had said unto Abram,** Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee" (Gen 12:1). And the first time we're told of the Lord ever appearing to Abraham was, "**And the LORD appeared unto Abram,** and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land: and **there builded he an altar unto the LORD, who appeared unto him**" (Gen 12:7). Abraham responded to that first appearance of the Lord by

building an altar to Him at that very place. His actions were that of building an altar and offering a sacrifice to the Lord.

He would then continue building altars to offer sacrifices and call upon the name of the Lord, “And he removed from thence unto a mountain on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, *having* Bethel on the west, and Hai on the east: and **there he builded an altar unto the LORD, and called upon the name of the LORD**” (Gen 12:7-8); “And he went on his journeys from the south even to Bethel, unto the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Hai; **Unto the place of the altar**, which he had made there at the first: and **there Abram called on the name of the LORD**” (Gen 13:3-4); “Then Abram removed *his* tent, and came and dwelt in the plain of Mamre, which *is* in Hebron, and **built there an altar unto the LORD**” (Gen 13:18).

Abraham’s actions, however, invoked no response from the Lord that we’re told of. Not one time did the Lord appear to him in response to his actions. Paul’s conclusion was that he wasn’t “justified by works [*actions*].” Had he been justified by his actions of building altars, the Lord would have appeared before him in response to calling upon His name. That “he hath *whereof* to glory; but not before God,” is that he would have gloried in his actions had he been before God. But he couldn’t glory before Him because He wasn’t there before him.

After his own “priestly” actions of building altars and calling upon the name of the Lord were to no avail, Abraham was then met by God’s priest, “And Melchizedek king of Salem **brought forth bread and wine**: and he *was* **the priest of the most high God**” (Gen 14:18). This bread and wine foretold of the sacrifice God would one day make for Abraham, “And as they were eating, **Jesus took bread**, and blessed *it*, and brake *it*, and gave *it* to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; **this is my body**. **And he took the cup**, and gave thanks, and gave *it* to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; For **this is my blood** of the new testament [*covenant*], which is shed for many **for the remission of sins**.” (Mat 26:26-28). Abraham came to learn that it wasn’t his actions of sacrificing that justified him, but God’s action of sacrificing for him that would.

After having met with Melchizedek, we’re not told of Abraham ever building another altar until the one he built to offer his own son in obedience to what he was told, “And they came to the place which God had told him of; and **Abraham built an altar there**, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and **laid him on the altar** upon the wood” (Gen 22:9). This time, Abraham’s actions of building an altar invoked a response from God. Rather than him calling upon the name of the Lord, the Messenger of the Lord called upon his name, “And the angel [*Messenger*] of the LORD called unto him out of heaven, and said, **Abraham, Abraham**” (Gen 22:11)!

Abraham committed himself to God

“For what saith the scripture? **Abraham believed [*pisteuō* 4100] God**, and it was counted [*logizomai* 3049] unto him for righteousness” (v. 3). The Greek verb *pisteuō* appears almost 250 times in the New Testament. And in the King James Version, all but eight times it’s translated as some form of the word “believe.” But the biased manner in which this word was handled by the translators is exposed by those eight exceptions, because in those exceptions, the actions being performed aren’t by people but by either God Himself or His Son.

The word “believe” sounds quite natural when it’s the actions of people directed toward either God or the Son of God. However, when it’s the actions of God Himself or His Son directed toward people, then “believe” doesn’t work because it can’t be God or His Son believing people. And this is precisely the dilemma caused by the eight exceptions. God’s actions or the Son of God’s actions force the true meaning of *pisteuō* as “commit unto” or “entrust with.” Since God doesn’t believe us or have faith in us, then this word doesn’t mean that we believe Him or have faith in Him.

Here are the eight occurrences: “If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will **commit to your trust** the true *riches*?” (Luk 16:11); “But Jesus did not **commit himself unto them**, because he knew all *men*” (Jhn 2:24); “Much every way: chiefly, because that **unto them were committed** the oracles of God” (Rom 3:2); “But contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision **was committed unto me**, as *the gospel* of the circumcision *was* unto Peter” (Gal 2:7); “For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward: but if against my will, a dispensation *of the gospel is committed unto me*” (1Co 9:17); “But as we were allowed of God **to be put in trust with** the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts” (1Th 2:4); “According to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which **was committed to my trust**” (1Ti 1:11); “But hath in due times manifested his word through preaching, which **is committed unto me** according to the commandment of God our Saviour” (Tit 1:3).

Now, simply for the sake of illustration, here’s the nonsense that results when the bolded phrases in those eight occurrences are replaced with “believe” instead: “If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will **believe in you** the true *riches*?” (Luk 16:11); “But Jesus did not **believe on them**, because he knew all *men*” (Jhn 2:24); “Much every way: chiefly, because that **unto them were believed** the oracles of God” (Rom 3:2); “But contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision **was believed in me**, as *the gospel* of the circumcision *was* unto Peter” (Gal 2:7); “For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward: but if against my will, a dispensation *of the gospel is believed in me*” (1Co 9:17); “But as we were allowed of God **to be believed** with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts” (1Th 2:4); “According to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which **was believed in me**” (1Ti 1:11); “But hath in due times manifested his word through preaching, which **is believed in me** according to the commandment of God our Saviour” (Tit 1:3).

In the KJV, the Greek verb *pisteuō* and its noun form *pistis* are always translated as “believe” and “faith” respectively when the contexts allow, but not when the contexts force otherwise. And although these words certainly include an element of believing and having faith, but they’re more correctly “commit unto,” “entrust with,” and “commitment,” “faithfulness.” That’s not my personal opinion but indicated by how those words are used consistently in the Scriptures. Words derive their meaning by how they’re used, not by how they’re defined in dictionaries. Every day English words are being used as slang to absorb new meanings they didn’t carry before. Eventually, dictionaries have to be revised to include those new meanings.

When it comes to the translation of the Scriptures into English, rather than being objective and unbiased, translators are being more loyal to a system of theology and therefore render words so that the message of Scripture conforms to that system. The unfortunate result is that the readers of the translation are swayed toward that theological system. The correct way is to glean the meaning of words by how they’re used throughout Scripture, then render them accordingly so that the message of Scripture speaks for itself.

The English language doesn’t have a verb and a noun that correspond fully with the Greek *pisteuō* and *pistis*. The best we can do is use “commit unto” or “entrust unto” for *pisteuō*, and “commitment” or “faithfulness”

for *pistis*. And it's only when these words are rendered correctly that the understanding of Paul's message about Abraham in Romans chapter four is truly understood.

That "Abraham believed [*committed unto*] God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness" is that he stopped trying to justify himself before God and committed unto God his justification. Essentially, he declared spiritual bankruptcy and threw himself at God's mercy. Therefore, God considered or recognized his commitment to Him as righteousness. So long as Abraham stayed committed to Him as the God of his life through dependence, faithfulness, humbleness, obedience, submission, trust, and unity, God considered him His friend rather than His enemy, "And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, **Abraham believed [*committed unto*] God**, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called **the Friend of God**" (Jas 2:23).

Abraham lifted his hand to the Lord

Genesis chapter 15 begins with "**After these things** the word of the LORD came unto Abram in a **vision, saying**" (Gen 15:1). And "these things" are the events recorded at the end of the previous chapter when "Melchizedek king of Salem" (Gen 14:18), and also "the king of Sodom" (Gen 14:21), met Abraham. We're not told how long it was after those events that this vision came to him—it could even have been later the same day. But the intrusive chapter break causes us to mentally sever and dissociate these events that followed from those events that preceded. The context indicates that Abraham committed himself to the Lord, "And he believed [*committed*] in the LORD" (Gen 15:6), when he had lifted his hand to the Lord before Melchizedek, "**I have lift up mine hand unto the LORD**, the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth" (Gen 14:22).

This action of "lifting up the hand" is found other places in the Scriptures for a commitment or a pledge from one party to another, particularly when God committed Himself to His people in the Exodus, "Thus saith the Lord GOD; In the day when I chose Israel, and **lifted up mine hand unto the seed of the house of Jacob**, and made myself known unto them in the land of Egypt, when **I lifted up mine hand unto them**, saying, I *am* the LORD your God; In the day *that* **I lifted up mine hand unto them**, to bring them forth of the land of Egypt into a land that I had espied for them, flowing with milk and honey, which *is* the glory of all lands" (Eze 20:5-6). However, when His people were proven uncommitted to Him, He turned His commitment against them, "Yet also **I lifted up my hand unto them** in the wilderness, that **I would not bring them** into the land which I had given *them*, flowing with milk and honey, which *is* the glory of all lands ... **I lifted up mine hand unto them** also in the wilderness, that **I would scatter them** among the heathen, and disperse them through the countries" (Eze 20:15,23).

This expression is also used of those committing or pledging enmity against another, "Blessed *be* the LORD thy God, which hath delivered up the men that **lifted up their hand against my lord the king**" (2Sa 18:28); "Sheba the son of Bichri by name, hath **lifted up his hand against the king**, *even* against David" (2Sa 20:21); "And Jeroboam the son of Nebat, an Ephrathite of Zereda, Solomon's servant, whose mother's name *was* Zeruah, a widow woman, even he **lifted up his hand against the king** ... And this *was* the cause that he **lifted up his hand against the king**" (1Ki 11:26,27).

Abraham committed himself to the Lord when he lifted his hand to the Lord before God's priest and king Melchizedek. Now, whether Melchizedek was literally the pre-incarnate Christ or simply a man that served as a type is quite irrelevant and distracting from the main point. As a side note, I take him simply as an ordinary man that served as a type because the writer of Hebrews called him a man, "Now consider how great **this man**

was" (Heb 7:4). And that he was "Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually" (Heb 7:3), doesn't mean he literally had no father and mother, or that he had no beginning and ending of life. The writer was simply pointing out that nothing at all was said about Melchizedek's beginning or ending, therefore the "order" or succession of his priesthood was unlike that of the Levitical priesthood, "another priest should rise **after the order of Melchisedec**, and not be called **after the order of Aaron**" (Heb 7:11). Melchizedek was simply a type of the true High Priest to come. And the bread and the wine that Melchizedek set before Abraham, "And Melchizedek king of Salem **brought forth bread and wine**" (Gen 14:18), foretold of Christ's broken body and shed blood on the cross for our sins:

Jesus took bread, and blessed *it*, and brake *it*, and gave *it* to the disciples, and said, **Take, eat; this is my body**. And **he took the cup**, and gave thanks, and gave *it* to them, saying, **Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood** of the new testament, which is shed for many for **the remission of sins**. But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I **drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom**. (Matthew 26:26-29)

Christ's shed blood didn't simply cover our sins but was for "the remission of sins," remitting them entirely to be forever forgiven. The Lord's Supper is His pledge to drink with us in His Father's kingdom, and it's our pledge to serve Him as our Lord for the rest of our lives. That Abraham understood the significance of the bread and wine of which he partook with Melchizedek, is evident by him no longer building altars and offering sacrifices. Eating and drinking with God's priest was his submission to God for his justification. Of course Abraham didn't know how God would ultimately do it, only that He would. And many years later, his answer to his son's question, "**Behold** the fire and the wood: but **where is the lamb** for a burnt offering? ... My son, **God will provide himself a lamb**" (Gen 22:7,8), foretold of God's answer to that question, "**Behold the Lamb** of God" (Jhn 1:29,36). As though finally answering Isaac's question "Behold ... where is the lamb?" John exclaimed "Behold the Lamb!"

After having ate and drank with God's priest, Abraham told the king of Sodom, "**I have lift up mine hand unto the LORD**, the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth, That I will not *take* from a thread even to a shoelatchet, and that I will not take any thing that *is* thine, **lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abram rich**" (Gen 14:22-23). He refused to enrich himself by making any compromise to the commitment he made. He was now committed to God.

It was "After these things" that God spoke to him, "*I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward*" (Gen 15:1). A shield and a reward is protection and provision. But God didn't say that He would simply protect and provide but that He is "*thy shield ... thy exceeding great reward.*" He was now Abraham's God. Paul was beginning to explain what it was that "Abraham ... hath found" (v. 1), to expound upon his conclusion a few verses earlier, "*Is he the God of the Jews only? is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also*" (3:29). Abraham committed himself to God for his justification, defense, and reward, "Abraham believed [*committed unto*] God." And God accepted his commitment, and considered him right before Himself, "it was counted [*deemed*] unto him for righteousness."

Jesus taught us to trust God our Father

Jesus Christ taught: “That **thine alms** may be in secret: and **thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly**” (Mat 6:4); “But thou, **when thou prayest**, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and **thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly**” (Mat 6:6); “That thou appear not unto men **to fast**, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and **thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly**” (Mat 6:18). That our Father “shall reward thee openly” is that we now look to Him for our reward as Abraham learned to do, “*I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward*” (Gen 15:1). We no longer care that anyone sees the good things we do, but only that God sees.

“**Take no thought for your life**, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? ... Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, *shall he* not much more *clothe* you, **O ye of little faith? [oligopistos 3640]**” (Mat 6:25,30). The Greek noun *oligopistos* translated as “little faith” was used only by Christ Himself, here in His Sermon on the Mount, and in these other places: “Why are ye fearful, O ye of **little faith [oligopistos 3640]?**” (Mat 8:26); “O thou of **little faith [oligopistos 3640]**, wherefore didst thou doubt?” (Mat 14:31); “O ye of **little faith [oligopistos 3640]**, why reason ye among yourselves, because ye have brought no bread?” (Mat 16:8); “If then God so clothe the grass, which is to day in the field, and to morrow is cast into the oven; how much more *will he clothe* you, O ye of **little faith [oligopistos 3640]?**” (Luk 12:28). This word consists of the adjective *oligos* for “few,” “little,” or “small,” and the noun *pistos* for “commitment,” “faithfulness,” or “trust.” It’s not little belief but little commitment or trust.

The context is about committing ourselves to God our Father, trusting Him to see and reward our good actions. This was also Abraham’s commitment to God, “*I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward*” (Gen 15:1). And the context is trusting God to provide for our essential daily needs, “**Therefore take no thought**, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? ... **Take therefore no thought** for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.” (Mat 6:31,34). Taking no thought for tomorrow isn’t about worrying but about trusting. We’re to not be thinking about what we can do to ensure our provision for tomorrow, but simply trusting God for what we need today.

“O ye of little faith [*commitment, faithfulness*]” is to have little committed to God in trusting Him each and every day. It’s when we look to people for reward—their acceptance, approval, praise, and recognition. It’s when we defend ourselves before people—justify our actions, make excuses, brag on ourselves, and get even. And it’s when we take control of our daily provision—store up for the future, set financial goals, plan our retirement, and compromise for our own gain. Certainly faith is involved with trust and commitment because we can’t have a trusting and committed relationship with someone yet never believing a word they say! The issue is that the message of faith alone being preached today *excludes* commitment and trust, whereas the true gospel message of commitment and trust that Jesus Christ Himself preached *includes* faith.

God’s people weren’t committed to Him

God committed Himself to His people when He chose them and delivered them from Egypt, “Thus saith the Lord GOD; In the day when I chose Israel, and **lifted up mine hand unto the seed of the house of Jacob**, and

made myself known unto them in the land of Egypt, when I **lifted up mine hand unto them**, saying, I *am* the LORD your God; In the day *that I lifted up mine hand unto them*” (Eze 20:5-6). However, they weren’t committed to Him, “And to whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that **believed [apeitheō 544] not?** So we see that they could not enter in because of **unbelief [apistia 570].**” (Heb 3:18-19), “I will therefore put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this, how that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that **believed [pisteuō 4100] not**” (Jde 1:5).

The root of the noun *apistia* is the adjective *pistos* which means “committed,” “faithful,” or “trusty.” Christ Himself used this word many times for faithful servants: “Who then is a faithful [*pistos* 4103] and wise servant” (Mat 24:45); “Well done, *thou* good and faithful [*pistos* 4103] servant: thou hast been faithful [*pistos* 4103] over a few things” (Mat 25:21); “Who then is that faithful [*pistos* 4103] and wise steward” (Luk 12:42); “He that is faithful [*pistos* 4103] in that which is least is faithful [*pistos* 4103] also in much” (Luk 16:10); “Well, *thou* good servant: because thou hast been faithful [*pistos* 4103] in a very little” (Luk 19:17).

When writing to the Galatians, Paul used this word *pistos* for Abraham, “So then they which be of faith [*commitment, faithfulness*] are blessed with **faithful [pistos 4103] Abraham**” (Gal 3:9, KJV, WEB, YLT). But because translators are more committed to what they’ve been taught rather than to what Scripture is actually teaching, they “fudge” their translation: “believing Abraham” (DBY, NKJV), “Abraham received because of his faith” (NLT), “Abraham, the man of faith” (NIV), “Abraham the believer” (NET). Peter wrote of what will happen to those not submitting to what the Scriptures actually say but forcing them to say something else, “they that are unlearned and unstable **wrest**, as *they do* also the other scriptures, **unto their own destruction**” (2Pe 3:16).

Unlike their committed and faithful father Abraham, God’s people weren’t committed and faithful to God, “they could not enter in because of unbelief [*unfaithfulness*]” (Heb 3:19), “destroyed them that believed [*committed, faithful*] not” (Jde 1:5). Many times they provoked God’s anger by complaining against Him and sinning against His commandments. Finally, when they reached the point of entering the land, the very purpose for having been delivered from Egypt, they wouldn’t trust God. Their hearts had become hardened by sin so that they feared man more than God. This wasn’t about unbelief or lack of faith, but being uncommitted and unfaithful.

David trusted God

Because of false teaching about faith and the mistranslation of *pisteuō* and *pistis* as “believe” and “faith” respectively, Abraham is upheld today as our example of a great man of faith. However, nobody ever talks about David that way. Why? Because in David’s own writings about himself, he said nothing of belief or faith but much about trust in God. Here’s an abbreviated list from the first 20 Psalms alone: “Blessed *are* all they that **put their trust in him**” (Psa 2:12); “Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and **put your trust in the LORD**” (Psa 4:5); “But let all those that **put their trust in thee** rejoice” (Psa 5:11); “O LORD my God, **in thee do I put my trust**” (Psa 7:1); “And they that know thy name will **put their trust in thee**” (Psa 9:10); “In the LORD **put I my trust**” (Psa 11:1); “Preserve me, O God: for **in thee do I put my trust**” (Psa 16:1); “O thou that savest by thy right hand them which **put their trust in thee**” (Psa 17:7); “The LORD *is* my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, **in whom I will trust**” (Psa 18:2); “*he is* a buckler to all those that **trust in him**” (Psa 18:30); “**Some trust** in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember **the name of the LORD our God**” (Psa 20:7).

What God Himself said about Abraham, wasn't that he believed Him but that he obeyed Him, "because thou hast **obeyed my voice**" (Gen 22:18), "Because that Abraham **obeyed my voice**" (Gen 26:5). Obedience comes from being committed and faithful. It's because Abraham was committed to God, "Even as Abraham **believed [committed unto] God**, and it was accounted to him for righteousness" (Gal 3:6), that Paul said he was faithful to God, "So then they which be of faith [*commitment, faithfulness*] are blessed with **faithful Abraham**" (Gal 3:9). He was committed and faithful to obeying whatever God told him to do.

God deemed Abraham right with Himself

"For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed [*committed unto*] God, and **it was counted [logizomai 3049] unto him for righteousness**" (v. 3). Of course Paul was quoting from, "And he believed [*committed unto*] in the LORD; and he **counted [ḥāšab 2803]** it to him for **righteousness [šʾdāqâ 6666]**" (Gen 15:6). The Hebrew verb *ḥāšab* and its Greek counterpart *logizomai* mean "to conclude about," "to count as," "to deem as," "to number among," or "to reckon." To better understand what was meant here about Abraham, a similar statement was made about the Levitical priest Phinehas, "Then stood up Phinehas, and executed judgment: and so the plague was stayed. And that was **counted [ḥāšab 2803]** unto him for **righteousness [šʾdāqâ 6666]**" (Psa 106:30-31). What Phinehas did was he "**took a javelin in his hand; And he went after the man of Israel into the tent, and thrust both of them through, the man of Israel, and the woman through her belly**" (Num 25:7-8). This event had nothing to do with believing or faith. God simply concluded or deemed Phinehas' actions as right in that immoral circumstance—that he did the right thing. Likewise, that "he believed [*committed unto*] in the LORD; and he counted [*ḥāšab 2803*] it to him for righteousness [*šʾdāqâ 6666*]" is that God deemed Abraham's commitment of himself as the right actions.

The Greek *logizomai* is used around 40 times in the New Testament, and about half concern concluding or thinking something: "And they reasoned [*logizomai 3049*] with themselves" (Mar 11:31); "And thinkest [*logizomai 3049*] thou this, O man" (Rom 2:3); "Therefore we conclude [*logizomai 3049*]" (Rom 3:28); "Likewise reckon [*logizomai 3049*] ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin" (Rom 6:11); "For I reckon [*logizomai 3049*]" (Rom 8:18); "to him that esteemeth [*logizomai 3049*] any thing to be" (Rom 14:14); "Let a man so account [*logizomai 3049*] of us" (1Co 4:1); "thinketh [*logizomai 3049*] no evil" (1Co 13:5); "I thought [*logizomai 3049*] as a child" (1Co 13:11); "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think [*logizomai 3049*] any thing" (2Co 3:5); "wherewith I think [*logizomai 3049*] to be bold against some, which think [*logizomai 3049*] of us" (2Co 10:2); "let him of himself think [*logizomai 3049*] this again" (2Co 10:7); "Let such an one think [*logizomai 3049*] this" (2Co 10:11); "For I suppose [*logizomai 3049*]" (2Co 11:5); "lest any man should think [*logizomai 3049*] of me" (2Co 12:6); "Brethren, I count [*logizomai 3049*] not myself to have apprehended" (Phl 3:13); "think [*logizomai 3049*] on these things" (Phl 4:8); "I pray God that it may not be laid [*logizomai 3049*] to their charge" (2Ti 4:16); "Accounting [*logizomai 3049*] that God was able to raise *him* up, even from the dead" (Heb 11:19); "I suppose [*logizomai 3049*], I have written briefly" (1Pe 5:12).

The other half of its occurrences are about Abraham here in Romans or in a couple of other places, "Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted [*logizomai 3049*] to him for righteousness" (Gal 3:6), "Abraham believed God, and it was imputed [*logizomai 3049*] unto him for righteousness" (Jas 2:23). While its remaining occurrences are: "And he was numbered [*logizomai 3049*] with the transgressors" (Mar 15:28); "And he was reckoned [*logizomai 3049*] among the transgressors" (Luk 22:37); "So that not only this our craft is in danger to be set at nought; but also that the temple of the great goddess Diana should be despised [*logizomai 3049*]"

(Act 19:27); “Therefore if the uncircumcision keep the righteousness of the law, shall not his uncircumcision be counted [*logizomai* 3049] for circumcision?” (Rom 2:26); “For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted [*logizomai* 3049] as sheep for the slaughter” (Rom 8:36); “the children of the promise are counted [*logizomai* 3049] for the seed” (Rom 9:8); “To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing [*logizomai* 3049] their trespasses unto them” (2Co 5:19).

That Paul meant “to conclude about” or “to think something” when using *logizomai* for Abraham here in Romans chapter four, is apparent by how he used it earlier in his letter, “And thinkest thou [*logizomai* 3049] this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, **that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?**” (2:3), “Therefore we conclude [*logizomai* 3049] **that a man is justified by faith [commitment, faithfulness] without the deeds [actions] of the law**” (3:28). It’s to reach a conclusion about something, then to consider it as such. In the first example, it’s about God’s people wrongly concluding that, although they were doing the same evil as Gentiles, they would be exempt from God’s judgment. And in the second example, it’s about Paul reaching the logical conclusion from the Scriptures that people are justified by the Son of God’s faithfulness to sacrifice Himself, apart from any actions of sacrificing animals prescribed by the law.

The point is that the Hebrew *ḥāšab* and Greek *logizomai* simply mean “to conclude about” someone or something, and to deem or regard it as so. However, in “Christian” teaching today about Abraham in Romans, it’s defined as one thing is the equivalent of another thing, one thing takes the place of another thing, or one thing substitutes for another thing. It’s being taught that Abraham was a man of faith, and God substituted his faith for righteous living. And like Abraham, although we’re not living righteously because we supposedly can’t, but because we’re believers we’re righteous. Therefore, although we continue to live in sin yet we’re righteous before God because our faith is counted in its place. That’s not what Paul was teaching about Abraham!

The King James Version uses “count,” “impute,” and “reckon” for *logizomai* concerning Abraham, which masks the underlying sense of what’s being said. The words “consider,” “deem,” or “regard” convey the intended idea more clearly. Abraham committed himself to God, therefore God deemed Abraham right with Himself.

Favor or debt?

“Now to him that worketh is the reward [*misthos* 3408] not reckoned [*deemed*] of grace [*favor*], but of debt [*opheilēma* 3783]” (v. 4). To bolster his argument that Abraham wasn’t justified by building altars and offering animal sacrifices, Paul raises the question of whether the remittance from God to Abraham—that He deemed him righteous—was reward out of favor, or payment out of hire. The Greek *misthos* can mean either because it was used by Christ Himself for both, “Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great **is your reward [misthos 3408] in heaven**” (Mat 5:12), “Call the **labourers**, and give them **their hire [misthos 3408]**, beginning from the last unto the first” (Mat 20:8). Our English “remittance” is a good equivalent for *misthos* because it also can be either.

Paul now gives an example of a laborer whose remittance is payment of the debt owed to him for his work. And he used the Greek neuter noun *opheilēma* for “debt” which was used only one other time in Scripture, by Christ Himself, “And forgive us our debts [*opheilēma* 3783], as we forgive our debtors [*opheiletēs* 3781]” (Mat 6:12). It conveys the meaning of our debts to God, and of debts owed to us by others. So then, was God

indebted to Abraham? Of course not! Therefore, Abraham couldn't have been justified by his labor of building altars and offering animal sacrifices.

The passage of Scripture from which Paul quoted, "And he **believed [committed unto]** in the LORD; and he **counted [deemed] it to him** for righteousness" (Gen 15:6), also states, "**I am** thy shield, *and* thy exceeding great **reward [sākār 7939]**" (Gen 15:1). The Hebrew *sākār* is also used in Scripture for both "reward" and for "hire." So, which is it here? If the remittance from God was for Abraham's labor of building altars and offering sacrifices, then it was payment for a debt and it makes God indebted to Abraham. God forbid! But the passage itself states that it was Abraham's commitment that God deemed as the basis for the remittance. Therefore, the remittance wasn't of Abraham's labor but of God's favor.

Paul is going to conclude the end purpose for Abraham's remittance a little later, "Therefore *it is* of faith [*commitment, faithfulness*], that *it might be* **by grace [favor]; to the end** the promise might be sure to **all the seed**; not to that only which is **of the law**, but to that also which is **of the faith [commitment, faithfulness] of Abraham**; who is the **father of us all**" (v. 16). The Levitical priesthood with its offerings and sacrifices under the law belonged only to Israel. And if justification before God came that way, then only they could be justified and none others. But since Abraham's justification was a remittance based upon his commitment to God, then anyone making that same commitment is remitted in the same way. Thus, Paul will conclude that the remittance was of Abraham's commitment for the end purpose of justification being by God's favor to all that make the same commitment.

God deems those committed to Him

"But to him that worketh not, but believeth [*commits unto*] on him that justifieth the ungodly [*asebēs 765*], his faith [*commitment, faithfulness*] is counted [*deemed*] for righteousness" (v. 5). The Greek adjective *asebēs* is a presumed derivative of the negative participle *alpha* and verb *sebō* which means "to worship." Christ used *sebō*, "But in vain they do **worship [sebō 4576] me**, teaching *for* doctrines the commandments of men" (Mat 15:9), "Howbeit in vain do they **worship [sebō 4576] me**, teaching *for* doctrines the commandments of men" (Mar 7:7). Therefore, the adjective *asebēs* with the negative particle prefix *alpha* carries the idea of the "not-worshippers" or "vain-worshippers" of God. In context concerning Abraham, it speaks of his vain worship through his old pagan ways of building altars and offering animal sacrifices. But what he came to learn, "Abraham ... hath found" (v. 1), was that worshipping the true God is only through the way He accepts. He learned that justification wasn't by the labor of his hands, but by putting it into God's hands so to speak. Rather than laboring with his hand, he lifted up his hand, "**I have lift up mine hand unto the LORD**, the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth" (Gen 14:22).

A little later, Paul will repeat the statement "his faith [*commitment, faithfulness*] is counted [*deemed*] for righteousness" (v. 5), "faith [*commitment, faithfulness*] was reckoned [*deemed*] to Abraham for righteousness" (v. 9). Abraham learned that worshipping the true God was by committing himself to Him and His way—not only making the commitment but keeping the commitment, or remaining committed. Strong commitment endures regardless of difficulties and trials along the way. When things are going well and as planned, it's easy to stay committed. But as Paul is going to teach, Abraham's commitment to "the righteousness of God" (1:17, 3:5,21,22), "his righteousness" (3:25,26), was tested. And his strong commitment and faithfulness serves as the example to God's people of remaining strongly committed and faithful to Him.

What David said (or didn't say!) about actions

“Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom **God imputeth [deems] righteousness without works [actions]**, *Saying*, Blessed *are* they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed *is* the man to whom the Lord will not impute [*deem*] sin.” (vs. 6-8). Paul was quoting from Psalm 32 where David wrote that he was forgiven by acknowledging and confessing his sins, “**I acknowledged my sin unto thee**, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, **I will confess my transgressions** unto the LORD; and **thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin**” (Psa 32:5), and said nothing about offering any animal sacrifice. That entire Psalm says nothing about any such actions. And this is what Paul meant by “God imputeth righteousness **without works [actions]**.” David said that God forgives our sins when we acknowledge and confess them, without saying anything about animal sacrifices also being needed.

Furthermore, when David acknowledged his sin in the matter of Uriah the Hittite and Bathsheba, he even said that he didn't give any sacrifice, “Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. **For I acknowledge my transgressions**: and my sin *is* ever before me. For **thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it**: thou delightest not in burnt offering. **The sacrifices of God *are* a broken spirit**: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.” (Psa 51:2-3,16-17). David understood that animal sacrifices never truly remitted sins. And Paul certainly had Psalm 51 in mind as well because he quoted from it a little earlier, “that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, *and* be clear when thou judgest” (Psa 51:4), “That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged” (3:4).

How was Abraham when it was deemed to him?

“*Cometh this blessedness* then upon the circumcision *only*, or upon the uncircumcision also? for we say that faith [*commitment, faithfulness*] was reckoned [*deemed*] to Abraham for righteousness. **How was it then reckoned [deemed]**? when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? **Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision.**” (vs. 9-10). This blessedness was what David wrote about, “**the blessedness of the man**, unto whom God **imputeth [deems] righteousness** without works [*actions*] ... **Blessed is the man** to whom the Lord will **not impute [deem] sin.**” It's the blessing of being deemed righteous by God while not deeming our sins against us.

Of course David was circumcised his entire life. Therefore, Paul's adversaries would argue that since it was David who wrote of this blessedness, then it must only apply to the circumcised. But Paul appeals to Abraham for even greater precedence than David. He asks how Abraham was at the time it was deemed to him—circumcised or uncircumcised? When it was said “And he believed [*committed unto*] in the LORD; and he counted [*deemed*] it to him for righteousness” (Gen 15:6), God hadn't given him circumcision. Furthermore, David wouldn't have had that same blessedness deemed to him had it not first been deemed to Abraham while uncircumcised.

The sign of circumcision

“And he received **the sign of circumcision, a seal** of the righteousness of the faith [*commitment, faithfulness*] which *he had yet* being uncircumcised: **that he might be the father of all them that believe [commit]**, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed [*deemed*] unto them also” (v. 11). Circumcision in the flesh is simply a sign or a token, “And ye shall **circumcise the flesh of your foreskin**; and it shall be a **token** of the covenant betwixt me and you” (Gen 17:11). A token doesn’t establish a fact but only indicates or represents an existing fact. Abraham’s righteous standing before God had been deemed to him many years earlier by his commitment. Circumcision in his flesh at this point was only a badge, sign, or symbol of that already established fact. It served as a seal of authentication.

A badge indicates identity. For example, because someone has passed the training to become a police officer, and made the commitment to uphold the duty of a police officer, they’re given a badge to indicate their identity as such. But someone that’s not a police officer doesn’t become one by simply displaying a badge. That’s impersonating a police officer. It’s the person that fulfills the commitment of a police officer that’s truly a police officer. And anyone not fulfilling the duty of that commitment is at danger of losing their standing and the badge that identifies them.

The Jewish people made the error of confusing their “badge” of circumcision with fulfilling the commitment it represented. They deemed themselves righteous before God simply because they were circumcised. But Paul was proving that it’s fulfilling the commitment that God deems for righteousness. Those committed to God, although without any “badge,” are deemed righteous by Him, while those uncommitted with a “badge” aren’t.

The father of circumcision

“And **the father of circumcision** to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who **also walk in the steps of that faith [commitment, faithfulness]** of our father Abraham, which *he had* being yet uncircumcised” (v. 12). That Abraham was “the father of circumcision” is that he was its progenitor—the first to have it and for his children to also have it. However, it was never intended that his children would simply be of the “circumcision only,” but that they would “also walk in the steps of that faith [*commitment, faithfulness*].” And just what were the steps of Abraham’s commitment in his walk with God? The main “step” was when he forsook Ishmael as his heir for Isaac instead.

What Paul will mention later in his letter, “Neither, because they are **the seed of Abraham**, *are they* all children: but, **In Isaac** shall thy seed be called. They which are **the children of the flesh**, these *are* not the children of God: but **the children of the promise** are counted for the seed” (9:7-8), he gave a more detailed explanation in his letter to the Galatians, “But he *who was* of the bondwoman was born **after the flesh**; but he of the freewoman *was* **by promise**” (Gal 4:23). By “hear the law” (Gal 4:21), Paul meant understanding the message God was speaking through the law. And His message wasn’t always apparent but sometimes hidden in a mystery. The events in Abraham’s life served allegorically and prophetically of what God would do later, “Which things are an allegory” (Gal 4:24). Abraham’s two sons by two different women represented figuratively the Old and New Covenants to come, “Abraham had **two sons**, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman ... Which things are **an allegory**: for these are the **two covenants**” (Gal 4:22,24). Hagar

corresponds figuratively to the law given from Mount Sinai, “For this **Agar is mount Sinai** in Arabia” (Gal 4:25), while Sarah to Christ’s law given in His Sermon on the Mount.

The Jewish people didn’t want to turn from the Old Covenant to the New, but this was necessary if they were to “walk in the steps of that faith [*commitment, faithfulness*]” of their father Abraham. God had promised Abraham, “he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir” (Gen 15:4), and Abraham committed himself to that promise, “And he believed [*committed unto*] in the LORD; and he counted [*deemed*] it to him for righteousness” (Gen 15:6). A short time later, Abraham had a son from his own bowels through Hagar, “And Hagar bare Abram a son: and Abram called his son’s name, which Hagar bare, Ishmael” (Gen 16:15). Promise fulfilled! Well, not exactly. For over ten years while Ismael was growing up, Abraham wrongly supposed that he was his heir. But the events of one day recorded in Genesis 17, concluding with Abraham becoming circumcised, “**In the selfsame day was Abraham circumcised, and Ishmael his son**” (Gen 17:26), tested Abraham’s commitment to God.

After hearing that he would have a son from his wife Sarah and doubting it could ever happen, he tried to argue his case for Ishmael instead, “O that Ishmael might live before thee!” (Gen 17:18). But God was doing things His way, “**But my covenant will I establish with Isaac**, which Sarah shall bear unto thee at this set time in the next year” (Gen 17:21). This son would be the fulfillment of the promise God had intended all along, “he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir” (Gen 15:4). Sarah and Isaac weren’t a change in God’s plan but the fulfillment of it. Thus, Hagar and Ishmael, Sarah and Isaac were allegorical of the two covenants to come. God’s plan from the beginning was His Son Jesus Christ. And as Abraham was rudely awakened with the realization that continuing with God meant forsaking Ishmael and pursuing Isaac, so it was with Israel—they had to forsake the Old Covenant for the New. Staying committed to God meant Abraham had to keep following Him even when He veered in an unexpected direction he really didn’t want to go. This was a huge step in Abraham’s commitment, and a similar “step” his children must take to remain committed.

The promise of all promises

“For **the promise**, that he should be the heir [*klēronomos* 2818] of the world [*kosmos* 2889], was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith [*commitment, faithfulness*]” (v. 13). God made several promises to Abraham. He promised to make a great nation from him, to make his name great, and to bless all ethnic people of the earth through him, “And **I will make of thee a great nation**, and I will bless thee, and **make thy name great**; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and **in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed**” (Gen 12:2-3).

Later, He promised him a begotten son from whom he would have children as numerous as the stars in heaven, “he that shall come forth **out of thine own bowels** shall be thine heir ... **tell the stars**, if thou be able to **number them**: and he said unto him, **So shall thy seed be**” (Gen 15:4,5). He also promised to give to him and his children the land in which he was sojourning, “**Unto thy seed have I given this land**, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates” (Gen 15:18), “And **I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land** wherein thou art a stranger, **all the land of Canaan**, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God” (Gen 17:8). He promised to make him a father of many nations, “thou shalt be **a father of many nations ... a father of many nations** have I made thee” (Gen 17:4,5). He promised that his wife Sarah would bear him a son at a set time the following year, “**Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son** indeed ... **Sarah shall bear** unto thee **at this set time** in the next year” (Gen 17:19,21), “I will certainly return unto thee according to

the time of life; and, lo, **Sarah thy wife shall have a son ... At the time appointed** I will return unto thee, according to the time of life, and **Sarah shall have a son**" (Gen 18:10,14). And He promised that his children would be through Isaac, and not Ishmael, "in Isaac shall thy seed be called" (Gen 21:12). Although God made several promises to Abraham over a span of many years, this final one was the promise of all promises.

And the angel [*messenger*] of the LORD **called unto Abraham out of heaven** the second time, By myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only *son*: **That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed** as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which *is* upon the sea shore; and **thy seed** shall possess the gate of his enemies; And in **thy seed** shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice. (Genesis 22:15-18)

This was the specific promise of which Paul was referring, "**the promise**, that he should be the heir of the world" (v. 13), "**the promise** made of none effect" (v. 14), "to the end **the promise** might be sure to all the seed" (v. 16). Therefore, the event of Abraham giving his son to God as a sacrifice on a mountain in Moriah is the required context for understanding what Paul was teaching here. This was also the specific promise Paul meant when teaching the Galatians, "That **the blessing of Abraham** might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive **the promise** of the Spirit [*breath*] through faith [*commitment, faithfulness*]" (Gal 3:14). The "blessing of Abraham" is the blessing contained within the promise, "That in blessing I will bless thee" (Gen 22:17). And this was also the specific promise the writer of Hebrews was teaching about, "Wherefore, holy brethren, **partakers of the heavenly calling**" (Heb 3:1), "For when **God made promise to Abraham**, because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself, Saying, **Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee**" (Heb 6:13-14). Along with the Jewish people, all ethnic people can partake of this promise to Abraham given by heavenly calling from the Messenger of the Lord, "And the angel [*messenger*] of the LORD called unto Abraham out of heaven" (Gen 22:15).

The heir of the world

"For the promise, that he should be **the heir [klēronomos 2818] of the world [kosmos 2889]**, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith [*commitment, faithfulness*]" (v. 13). Abraham becoming "the heir of the world" would be through the promise which included all the nations of the world, "And in thy seed shall **all the nations [gôy 1471] of the earth** be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice" (Gen 22:18). And although this was promised in Genesis 22, God had already stated His intention during Abraham's very first encounter with Him back in Genesis 12, "And I will make of thee a great **nation [gôy 1471]**, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall **all families [mišpāhâ 4940] of the earth be blessed**" (Gen 12:2-3). The Hebrew noun *gôy* means "nation," and noun *mišpāhâ* means "ethnicity" or "family," as they are both used in this statement after the flood, "By these were the isles of **the Gentiles [gôy 1471]** divided in their lands; every one after his tongue, after their **families [mišpāhâ 4940]**, in their **nations [gôy 1471]**" (Gen 10:5).

Writing to the Galatians, Paul quoted from Abraham's first encounter with the Lord, "in thee shall all families [*mišpāhâ* 4940] of the earth be blessed" (Gen 12:3), "And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify **the heathen [ethnos 1484]** through faith [*commitment, faithfulness*], **preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying**, In thee shall **all nations [ethnos 1484] be blessed**" (Gal 3:8). That God "preached before the gospel

unto Abraham,” isn’t that God literally preached a sermon to him, but is simply an expression of Paul’s to indicate that the saving gospel message Jesus Christ preached had been foreseen all the way back then. Before promising and swearing by Himself, God had already “preached before the gospel unto Abraham,” that all ethnicities and nations of the world, not just the ethnic Hebrew or Jewish people, would be blessed in Abraham.

God sent His only begotten Son into this world to save the world: “Go ye into all **the world [kosmos 2889]**, and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mar 16:15); “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of **the world [kosmos 2889]**” (Jhn 1:29); “For God so loved **the world [kosmos 2889]**, that he gave his only begotten Son” (Jhn 3:16); “this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of **the world [kosmos 2889]**” (Jhn 4:42); “For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto **the world [kosmos 2889]**” (Jhn 6:33); “I am the light of **the world [kosmos 2889]**” (Jhn 8:12); “I came not to judge the world, but to save **the world [kosmos 2889]**” (Jhn 12:47); “To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling **the world [kosmos 2889]** unto himself” (2Co 5:19); “And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for *the sins of the whole world [kosmos 2889]*” (1Jo 2:2); “And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son *to be* the Saviour of **the world [kosmos 2889]**” (1Jo 4:14).

Singular “Seed,” not plural

“For the promise, that he should be the heir [*klēronomos* 2818] of the world [*kosmos* 2889], was not **to Abraham, or to his seed**, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith [*commitment, faithfulness*]” (v. 13). The specific promise in question is the promise God made to Abraham that day on the mountain in Moriah, and that promise wasn’t actually made to Abraham but to “his seed.” By “to Abraham, or to his seed,” he was saying “to Abraham” or really “to his seed.” He taught the same to the Galatians about the same promise, “Now **to Abraham and his seed** were the promises made. He saith not, And **to seeds, as of many**; but as of one, And **to thy seed, which is Christ**” (Gal 3:16). The Jewish people misunderstood “thy seed” in the promise to be the many descendants of Abraham. Therefore, they considered the promise to them exclusively, and not to any other people unless also becoming circumcised along with them.

However, when God gave to Abraham the covenant of circumcision, He used the plural pronoun “their” in place of “thy seed,” “And I will establish **my covenant** between me and thee and **thy seed** after thee in **their generations** ... Thou shalt keep **my covenant** therefore, thou, and **thy seed** after thee in **their generations**. This *is my covenant*, which ye shall keep, between me and you and **thy seed** after thee; Every man child among you shall be **circumcised**.” (Gen 17:7,9-10). But when God promised the blessing to Abraham, He used the singular pronoun “his” in place of “thy seed,” “That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply **thy seed** as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which *is* upon the sea shore; and **thy seed** shall possess the gate of **his enemies**; And in **thy seed** shall all the nations of the earth be blessed” (Gen 22:17-18). Circumcision was given to Abraham’s many descendants, but the promise was to just one Descendant—God’s Son Jesus Christ.

The promise “that he should be **the heir [klēronomos 2818]** of the world,” wasn’t that Abraham himself would be the heir of the world, but that his Seed would be, “to Abraham, or **to his seed**,” (v. 13) “And **to thy seed**, which is Christ” (Gal 3:16). Paul taught elsewhere: “And if children, then **heirs [klēronomos 2818]; heirs [klēronomos 2818]** of God, and **joint-heirs with Christ**” (8:17); “For as many of you as have been **baptized into Christ** ... And if ye *be* Christ’s, then are ye **Abraham’s seed**, and **heirs [klēronomos 2818]** according to the

promise” (Gal 3:27,29); “if a son, then an **heir [klēronomos 2818]** of God through Christ” (Gal 4:7). Jesus Christ is the Heir of the world, and it’s those that have been baptized into Him that partake with Him.

The promise came through Abraham’s commitment

“For the promise, that he should be the heir [klēronomos 2818] of the world [kosmos 2889], was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but **through the righteousness of faith [commitment, faithfulness]**” (v. 13). When God made the promise to Abraham and swore by Himself, twice He said, “**because** thou hast done this thing ... **because** thou hast obeyed my voice” (Gen 22:16,18). Therefore, the promise was *because* of Abraham’s commitment and faithfulness to God. It’s because Abraham remained committed and faithful to God, even in this final great test of his obedience, that he obtained the promise, “And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise” (Heb 6:15).

The law would make the promise of none effect

“For if they which are of the law *be* heirs, **faith [commitment, faithfulness] is made void**, and the promise made of none effect” (v. 14). Paul’s Jewish adversaries would contend that the fulfillment of this promise and the receiving of God’s blessing comes through circumcision and the keeping of all aspects of the law, including the non-moral actions of the law. After all, Abraham was circumcised when this promise was given. However, since God made His promise and extended His blessing *because* of Abraham’s commitment and faithfulness to Him, and since God swore the promise by Himself that He would be committed and faithful to Abraham in keeping it, then receiving the fulfillment of this promise

Since Abraham was faithful to give his only begotten son to God, his only son he had begotten from his wife Sarah and his only son he had any hope of being his heir, then God would be faithful to give His only begotten Son to Abraham, “**By myself have I sworn**, saith the LORD, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, **thine only son**” (Gen 22:16). Abraham had lifted his hand to the highest of all, swearing by God Himself that he would be faithful to Him, “I have **lift up mine hand** unto the LORD, **the most high God**, the possessor of heaven and earth” (Gen 14:22), “And he **believed [committed] in the LORD**; and he counted [*deemed*] it to him for righteousness” (Gen 15:6). But since there is no greater than God Himself, God swore His faithfulness to Abraham by Himself, “For when God made promise to Abraham, **because he could swear by no greater, he sware by himself**” (Heb 6:13).

God’s promise was that He would give His only begotten Son, the singular Seed or Descendant of Abraham, “That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply **thy seed** as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which *is* upon the sea shore; and **thy seed** shall possess the gate of **his** enemies; And **in thy seed** shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice” (Gen 22:17-18). And his Descendant would be sacrificed and raised from the dead as foreseen that day in Isaac.

Abraham being multiplied would come through his Seed, “in multiplying I will **multiply thy seed.**” Abraham’s children, therefore, are all of those and only those that are *in* his Seed, “**in thy seed shall all the nations** of the earth be blessed.” And the only way to be *in* his Seed is to be baptized into Him, “For as many of you as have been **baptized into Christ** have put on Christ ... And if ye *be* Christ’s, then are ye **Abraham’s seed**, and heirs

according to the promise” (Gal 3:27,29). Through the preaching of the apostle Peter, both Jews and Gentiles were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ: “**Repent, and be baptized** every one of you **in the name of Jesus Christ** for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For **the promise** is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, *even* as many as the Lord our God shall call.” (Act 2:38-39); “Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? And he commanded them to be **baptized in the name of the Lord.**” (Act 10:47-48).

That “**thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies**” is what Abraham’s Seed Himself told Peter, “That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build **my church [ekklēsia 1577]**; and **the gates of hell [hadēs 86] shall not prevail against it**. And I will give unto thee **the keys [kleis 2807] of the kingdom of heaven**” (Mat 16:18-19). The Greek noun *hadēs* is used 11 times in the New Testament, and in the KJV it’s translated as “hell” 10 of those times. The one exception is where the context—the resurrection of the body from the grave—forced the correct translation, “O death, where *is* thy sting? O **grave [hadēs 86]**, where *is* thy victory?” (1Co 15:55). It isn’t a place of fire where disembodied spirits are burned, but simply a grave or a tomb where a dead body is buried. David’s prophecy about Christ, “Because thou wilt not leave my soul **in hell [hadēs 86]**, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One **to see corruption** ... He seeing this before spake of **the resurrection of Christ**, that his soul was not left **in hell [hadēs 86]**, neither **his flesh did see corruption**” (Act 2:27,31), was that before His body began to decay, He would be resurrected. And all Jewish men in Jerusalem hearing Peter preach that day could attest that David’s body was still in his sealed tomb, “Men *and* brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch **David**, that he is both dead and buried, and **his sepulchre is with us unto this day**” (Act 2:29), but Christ’s tomb was still empty since the Passover.

The “gates of hell [*hadēs* 86]” is simply the entrance to the grave. The entrance to the grave by death wouldn’t prevail over Christ’s church—the assembling or congregating of His people—because it didn’t prevail over Him, “I *am* he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, **I am alive for evermore**, Amen; and have **the keys [kleis 2807] of hell [hadēs 86]** and of death” (Rev 1:18). Abraham’s Seed would “possess the gate of his enemies,” and death itself is the last enemy that will be destroyed, “**The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death**” (1Co 15:26). The promise to Abraham of victory over death and the grave in resurrection, is only by baptism into Abraham’s Seed.

To reject God’s only begotten Son is to reject the promise God made to Abraham and exclude oneself from the blessing. God’s Son freed His people from the requirement of circumcision and everything that pertains to it. Anyone commanding circumcision with its actions—abstaining from certain meats, keeping holy days including the Sabbath, and offering animal sacrifices—is voiding God’s promise and making it of none effect.

The outcome of the law was God’s wrath

“Because **the law worketh wrath**: for where no law is, *there is* no transgression” (v. 15). Paul wrote to the Galatians, “For as many as are of **the works [actions] of the law are under the curse**: for it is written, Cursed *is* every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them” (Gal 3:10). Just before he died, Moses wrote the book of Deuteronomy to the second generation of Israel that God had brought out of Egypt. They affirmed that the Lord would be their God, and God affirmed them as His special people, “**Thou hast avouched the LORD this day to be thy God**, and to walk in his ways, and to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and to hearken unto his voice: **And the LORD hath avouched thee this day to be his peculiar people**, as he hath promised thee, and that *thou* shouldst **keep all**

his commandments" (Deu 26:17-18). Moses then instructed them that after Joshua had brought them into the land, representatives from half the tribes must stand on mount Gerizim to pronounce blessings, and the other half on mount Ebal to pronounce curses, "**These shall stand upon mount Gerizim to bless the people**, when ye are come over Jordan; Simeon, and Levi, and Judah, and Issachar, and Joseph, and Benjamin: **And these shall stand upon mount Ebal to curse**; Reuben, Gad, and Asher, and Zebulun, Dan, and Naphtali." (Deu 27:12-13). And the list of curses was concluded with the statement Paul quoted to the Galatians, "**Cursed be he that confirmeth not *all* the words of this law to do them**. And all the people shall say, Amen." (Deu 27:26). When they came into the land, they indeed carried out what Moses instructed.

And all Israel, and their elders, and officers, and their judges, stood on this side the ark and on that side before the priests the Levites, which bare the ark of the covenant of the LORD, as well the stranger, as he that was born among them; **half of them over against mount Gerizim, and half of them over against mount Ebal; as Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded** before, that they should bless the people of Israel. And afterward he read all the words of the law, **the blessings and cursings**, according to all that is written in the book of the law. **There was not a word of all that Moses commanded, which Joshua read not before all the congregation of Israel**, with the women, and the little ones, and the strangers that were conversant among them. (Joshua 8:33-35)

Paul's point was that when Israel came into the land God promised to Abraham, they committed themselves to keeping all He commanded through Moses, while acknowledging the curses that would come upon them if they didn't. Of course, they didn't. Throughout the ages of the Judges and the Kings, they repeatedly sinned against God's commandments, provoking His wrath. Eventually, the full force of God's curse came upon them and they were carried away captive to Babylon. Daniel affirmed it, "Yea, **all Israel have transgressed thy law**, even by departing, that they might not obey thy voice; **therefore the curse is poured upon us**, and the oath that *is* written in **the law of Moses** the servant of God, **because we have sinned against him**" (Dan 9:11), and Paul concluded it, "For **as many as** are of the works [*actions*] of the law are **under the curse**" (Gal 3:10).

Paul then quoted from Habakkuk, "But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, *it is* evident: for, **The just shall live by faith [commitment, faithfulness]**" (Gal 3:11). Before carrying away His people to Babylon, God already declared through the prophet Habakkuk, "Behold, his soul *which* is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by **his faith [commitment, faithfulness]**" (Hab 2:4), "the person of integrity will live because of **his faithfulness**" (NET), "the righteous person will live by **his faithfulness**" (NIV). He affirmed that the just or righteous person would live, have eternal life, by His faithfulness to the promise He swore to Abraham. His faithfulness to that promise would be fulfilled in Abraham's Seed—sending His only begotten Son into this world.

"And the law is not of faith [*commitment, faithfulness*]: but, **The man that doeth them shall live in them**" (Gal 3:12). That "the law is not of faith [*commitment, faithfulness*]" is that law of Moses wasn't included in God's promise of commitment and faithfulness He swore to Abraham. God's people that lived under the law before Christ came, lived or had the hope of eternal life, by doing God's judgments, ordinances, and statutes, "Ye shall do **my judgments**, and keep **mine ordinances**, to walk therein: I *am* the LORD your God. Ye shall therefore keep **my statutes**, and **my judgments**: which **if a man do, he shall live in them**: I *am* the LORD." (Lev 18:4-5). Such actions included abstinence from certain meats, "These *are* the beasts which **ye shall eat** among all the beasts that *are* on the earth ... Nevertheless these **shall ye not eat**" (Lev 11:2,4), and keeping the Sabbaths, "Ye shall fear every man his mother, and his father, and **keep my sabbaths**: I *am* the LORD your

God” (Lev 19:3), “Ye shall **keep my sabbaths**, and reverence my sanctuary: I *am* the LORD” (Lev 19:30). Living in the Babylonian captivity, the prophet Ezekiel affirmed this: “And I gave them **my statutes**, and shewed them **my judgments**, which *if a man do, he shall even live in them*” (Eze 20:11); “they walked not in **my statutes**, and they despised **my judgments**, which *if a man do, he shall even live in them*; and **my sabbaths** they greatly polluted” (Eze 20:13); “they walked not in **my statutes**, neither kept **my judgments** to do them, which *if a man do, he shall even live in them*; they polluted **my sabbaths**” (Eze 20:21).

Jesus Christ came in fulfillment of God’s promise to Abraham, and redeemed His people from that curse, “Christ hath **redeemed us from the curse of the law**, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree: That **the blessing of Abraham** might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive **the promise** of the Spirit [*breath*] through **faith [commitment, faithfulness]**” (Gal 3:13-14). Therefore, “the blessing of Abraham,” “That in blessing I will bless thee” (Gen 22:17), comes also to the Gentiles, “And **in thy seed shall all the nations** of the earth **be blessed**” (Gen 22:18), that all nations would partake of “the promise of the Spirit [*breath*],” resurrection to eternal life by God’s breath, “through faith [*commitment, faithfulness*],” through God’s faithfulness to the commitment He swore to Abraham.

The promise was to all the seed of Abraham

“Therefore *it is* of faith [*commitment, faithfulness*], that *it might be* by grace [*favor*]; **to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed**; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith [*commitment, faithfulness*] of Abraham; who is the father of us all” (v. 16). Paul now draws the conclusion from the points he had been proving, that righteousness before God is by commitment, so that it can be by God’s favor, for the end purpose that the promise would be to all Abraham’s seed. And he stated his conclusion as somewhat of a “chain” of logical inferences in which one depends upon another or leads to another. He will use this similar approach or method a few more times later in his letter: “tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope: And hope maketh not ashamed” (5:3-5); “Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified” (8:30); “How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed [*committed*]? and how shall they believe [*committed*] in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent?” (10:14-15). If all of the prerequisites are met, then the logical conclusion is established. Therefore, Paul proves at length all of the prerequisites to reach the conclusion.

That it’s “of faith [*commitment, faithfulness*], that *it might be* by grace [*favor*],” he explained early in this passage that a worker’s remittance is out of debt, “Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace [*favor*], but of debt” (v. 4), while the one that commits to God is remitted out of favor, “But to him that worketh not, but believeth [*commits upon*] on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith [*commitment, faithfulness*] is counted for righteousness” (v. 5). God never remitted Abraham or His people on account of their animal sacrifices because that would have made Him a debtor to them. Rather, His remittance to is by His favor based on commitment to Him. No other people had been given the blessing of knowing Him and being committed to Him as their God to be favored by Him above all other people. And since the promise was given through commitment—Abraham keeping his commitment to God in doing and obeying what he was told, “**because thou hast** done this thing ... **because thou hast** obeyed my voice” (Gen 22:16,18)—then God can favor anyone likewise committed to Him.

The end purpose or final goal of God's righteousness being by commitment is so that the fulfillment of His promise would be to all Abraham's children—not only to the circumcised committed to God in the same steps as Abraham, but also to the uncircumcised committed to God after the example of Abraham. By "all the seed," Paul meant that there are two "streams" or issues of Abraham's children: (1) those circumcised in the flesh under the law, mainly his biological descendants from Isaac and Jacob, and also all non-biological proselytes; (2) those baptized into his one Descendant Jesus Christ, committing themselves to God as Abraham did.

Because the promise was made to only one Descendant of Abraham, "That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply **thy seed** as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which *is* upon the sea shore; and **thy seed** shall possess the gate of **his** enemies; And in **thy seed** shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice" (Gen 22:17-18), then partaking of the fulfillment of this promise is only through this one Descendant of Abraham. Since the promise wasn't made to all Abraham's descendants but to only one Descendant, then all Abraham's descendants must be baptized in the name of this one Descendant to partake of the promise, "Repent, and **be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ** for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost [*breath*]" (Act 2:38). And since the promise was to this one Descendant, then it's the prerogative of this one Descendant to allow every nation of people to also partake of the promise through Him: "What God hath cleansed, **that call not thou common**" (Act 10:15), "God hath shewed me that I should **not call any man common** or unclean" (Act 10:28), "But in **every nation** he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him" (Act 10:35), "And he commanded them to be **baptized in the name of the Lord**" (Act 10:48). Therefore, all baptized into Christ are deemed by God as Abraham's children and partakers of the promise, "For as many of you as have been **baptized into Christ** have put on Christ. There is neither **Jew nor Greek**, there is neither **bond nor free**, there is neither **male nor female**: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye *be* Christ's, then are ye **Abraham's seed**, and heirs according to **the promise**" (Gal 3:27-29). Although circumcision is possible only with males, baptism is for all—Jew and Greek, slave and free, male and female.

A father of many nations

"(As it is written, **I have made thee a father of many nations**,) before him whom he believed [*committed unto*], *even* God, who quickeneth the dead, and **calleth those things which be not as though they were**" (v. 17). This passage in verses 17-22 mainly concerns the event recorded in Genesis chapter 17, but also includes Abraham's walk with God through Genesis chapter 22. Genesis 17 recounts the day God changed Abram's name to Abraham, gave him circumcision in his flesh, changed his wife's name from Sarai to Sarah, and changed his hope of an heir to the son that would be miraculously born from her. It was a very busy day!

The Hebrew proper masculine noun *'abrām* first appearing in "And Terah lived seventy years, and begat **Abram** [*'abrām* 87], Nahor, and Haran" (Gen 11:26), is a contraction of the proper masculine noun *'ăbîrām*, the name of one of the men allied with Korah in the rebellion against Moses, "Now Korah, the son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, and Dathan and **Abiram** [*'ăbîrām* 48], the sons of Eliab, and On, the son of Peleth, sons of Reuben" (Num 16:1). This name *'ăbîrām* is derived from the Hebrew common noun *'āb* for "father" first used in, "Therefore shall a man leave his **father** [*'āb* 1] and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh" (Gen 2:24), and the Hebrew verb *rûm* used by Abram himself in, "And Abram said to the king of Sodom, **I have lift up** [*rûm* 7311] **mine hand unto the LORD**, the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth" (Gen 14:22). The name *'ăbîrām* means literally "my father is exalted" or "my father is lifted up." Thus, the name Abram means "exalted father."

Abram's native land was Chaldea, "Now these *are* the generations of Terah: Terah begat **Abram** [**'abrām 87**], Nahor, and Haran; and Haran begat Lot. And Haran died before his father Terah in **the land of his nativity, in Ur of the Chaldees** [**kaśdîmâ 3778**]." (Gen 11:27-28). This was the same land Ezekiel, Daniel, and God's people were sent to captivity, "The word of the LORD came expressly unto Ezekiel the priest, the son of Buzi, in the land of **the Chaldeans** [**kaśdîmâ 3778**]" (Eze 1:3), "whom they might teach the learning and **the tongue of the Chaldeans** [**kaśdîmâ 3778**]" (Dan 1:4). It's no coincidence that God brought Abram out of Chaldea into the promised land, but then brought His people out of the promised land back into Chaldea for punishment.

The "tongue of the Chaldeans [**kaśdîmâ 3778**]" (Dan 1:4), was Aramaic. And the equivalent of the Hebrew *'āb* for "father" is the Aramaic *'ab* used by both Ezra and Daniel in the Chaldean captivity, "That search may be made in the book of the records of thy **fathers** [**'ab 2**]" (Ezr 4:15), "I thank thee, and praise thee, O thou God of my **fathers** [**'ab 2**]" (Dan 2:23). Christ Himself used this Aramaic word for God His Father when praying in the garden before going to the cross, "And he said, **Abba** [**abba 5**], **Father**, all things *are* possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt" (Mar 14:36). The Greek *abba* is a transliteration of the Aramaic.

God changed Abram's name to "Abraham" in Genesis 17, "As for me, behold, my covenant *is* with thee, and thou shalt be **a father** [**'āb 1**] **of many** [**hāmôn 1995**] **nations** [**gôy 1471**]. Neither shall thy name any more be called **Abram** [**'abrām 87**], but thy name shall be **Abraham** [**'abrāhām 85**]; **for a father** [**'āb 1**] **of many** [**hāmôn 1995**] **nations** [**gôy 1471**] have I made thee." (Gen 17:4-5). The Hebrew noun *hāmôn* first appears here and means "an abundance," "a crowd," or "a multitude" with the sense of a roar, sound, or tumult. It's verb form *hāmâ* means "to growl," "to murmur," or "to roar." And the Hebrew noun *gôy* means "nations" of people, "By these were the isles of **the Gentiles** [**gôy 1471**] divided in their lands; every one after his tongue, after their families, in **their nations** [**gôy 1471**]" (Gen 10:5), "These *are* the families of the sons of Noah, after their generations, in **their nations** [**gôy 1471**]: and by these were **the nations** [**gôy 1471**] divided in the earth after the flood" (Gen 10:32). Thus, *'abrāhām* is "a father [**'āb 1**] of many [**hāmôn 1995**] nations [**gôy 1471**]," a father of a roar of nations—a father of many nations.

God called what was not, as though it were

"(As it is written, **I have made thee a father of many nations,**) before him whom he believed [*committed unto*], *even* God, who quickeneth the dead, and **calleth those things which be not as though they were**" (v. 17). When God changed Abram's name, Abraham wasn't yet what he would be—a father of many nations. The fulfillment of this promise wouldn't happen in his lifetime but God went ahead and changed his name and declared it as though it was already so, "**thou shalt be** a father of many nations ... for a father of many nations **have I made thee**" (Gen 17:5).

The message Paul was now revealing from this event is that although God's people were only one nation, His intent all along was that He would be the God of many nations. And although God became the Father of this one nation, "Ye *are* the children of the LORD your God" (Deu 14:1), He would become the Father of many. Although He was not yet, He would be the Father of many nations. Thus, Abraham, "a father of many nations" was figurative of God—the Father of many nations.

Abraham was figurative of God

God intended Abraham and his son Isaac to be figurative of Himself and His Son Jesus Christ. Paul revealed this truth in detail to the Galatians, “**Abraham had two sons**, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman ... Which things are **an allegory**: for these are **the two covenants**” (Gal 4:22,24). Unbeknownst to Abraham, his life was playing out by God allegorically of Himself and the two covenants He would later establish—the Old Covenant through Moses, and the New Covenant through His only begotten Son Jesus Christ. Hagar, Sarah’s servant, was figurative of the Old Covenant law given from mount Sinai, “**the one from the mount Sinai**, which gendereth to bondage, **which is Agar**” (Gal 4:24). This corresponds to all the events that transpired leading up to David ruling as Messiah in Jerusalem, “For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and **answereth [corresponds] to Jerusalem which now is**, and is in bondage with her children” (Gal 4:25).

Sarah, the freewoman, on the other hand, was a type of the New Covenant and Christ’s law. He is the Messiah that will rule from the Jerusalem which will come down from heaven to earth, “And I John saw the holy city, **new Jerusalem**, coming down from God **out of heaven**” (Rev 21:2), “**But Jerusalem which is above is free**, which is **the mother of us all**” (Gal 4:25-26). That Sarah is “the mother of us all” is that she corresponds to everything embodied within the New Covenant. Abraham and Sarah are figuratively the father and mother of God’s children through the New Covenant, while Abraham and Hagar of those trusting in the Old. Although the Jewish people descended from Abraham and Sarah through Isaac, so long as they reject the Son of God and the New Covenant, God deems them children of Abraham and Hagar through Ishmael! It’s only those that submit to His Son that God deems His children by Abraham and Sarah through Isaac.

As Abraham’s son would come out from him, “This shall not be thine heir; but he that shall **come forth out of thine own bowels** shall be thine heir” (Gen 15:4), Jesus Christ came out from God: “When *there were* no depths, **I was brought forth**; when *there were* no fountains abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled, before the hills **was I brought forth**” (Pro 8:24-25); “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of **the only begotten of the Father**,) full of grace [*favor*] and truth ... No man hath seen God at any time; **the only begotten Son**, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared *him*” (Jhn 1:14,18); “For God so loved the world, that he gave **his only begotten Son** ... he hath not believed [*trusted*] in the name of **the only begotten Son of God**” (Jhn 3:16,18); “**I proceeded forth** and came from God” (Jhn 8:42); “**I came out from God**. I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world” (Jhn 16:27-28); “God sent **his only begotten Son** into the world” (1Jo 4:19).

Abraham being told to sacrifice his only begotten son from Sarah, “**Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac**, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and **offer him there for a burnt offering** upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of” (Gen 22:2), foretold of God one day sacrificing His only begotten Son. Of course Isaac didn’t actually die that day but his deliverance from death served as a type of resurrection. The writer of Hebrews stated, “By faith [*faithfulness*] Abraham, when he was tried, **offered up Isaac**: and he that had received the promises **offered up his only begotten son**, Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: Accounting that God *was* able to **raise him up, even from the dead**; from whence also he **received him in a figure**” (Heb 11:17-19). That Abraham “received him in a figure” correlates with God the Father receiving His Son at His right hand.

Abraham serving figuratively as a type of God diminishes the plausibility of him being an example of belief or faith. Paul even stated earlier, “shall their unbelief [*unfaithfulness*] make **the faith [faithfulness] of God** without effect?” (3:3), “Will their unfaithfulness nullify **God’s faithfulness?**” (NIV). Since he was teaching

about God's faithfulness to Abraham, then as a type of God, he was teaching about Abraham's faithfulness as well. Furthermore, Paul's teaching about Abraham to the Galatians was also about his faithfulness, "So then they which be of faith [*faithfulness*] are blessed with **faithful [pistos 4103] Abraham**" (Gal 3:9). The Greek *pistos* is an adjective describing Abraham as faithful. Other Bible versions, however, render it incorrectly as a noun or a verb, "Abraham the believer" (NET), "Abraham, the man of faith" (NIV), "believing Abraham" (NKJV). Paul wasn't talking about him as a man of faith or a believer, but as "faithful Abraham."

Abraham walked before Him whom he was committed

"(As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) **before him whom he believed [committed], even God**, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were" (v. 17). By "**before him whom he believed [committed]**" (v. 17), Paul was referring to God's commandment to Abraham at the beginning of Genesis chapter 17, "**walk before me**, and be thou perfect" (Gen 17:1). And Abraham kept this commandment faithfully, "The LORD, **before whom I walk**" (Gen 24:40), "God, **before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk**" (Gen 48:15).

Of course "walk" is simply an expression for how Abraham lived before God, and was likely derived from his literal walking through the land, "Arise, **walk through the land** in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for I will give it unto thee" (Gen 13:17). In faithful obedience to God, he left his home country without knowing his destination, "**Get thee out of thy country**, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, **unto a land that I will shew thee**" (Gen 12:1), "And he went on **his journeys**" (Gen 13:3), "**By faith [commitment, faithfulness] Abraham**, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, **obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went**" (Heb 11:8). We can only guess what he left behind—comfort, prominence, power, and wealth—to become a nomad roaming from one place to another in tents, "**By faith [commitment, faithfulness] he sojourned** in the land of promise, as *in* a strange country, **dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob**, the heirs with him of the same promise" (Heb 11:8-9). Jacob would later recount his difficult life being short in comparison with his fathers, "The days of the years of **my pilgrimage are** an hundred and thirty years: **few and evil have the days of the years of my life been**, and have not attained unto the days of the years of **the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage**" (Gen 47:9). For a hundred years in the land, Abraham never owned any of it or even had a house but just lived in tents.

This expression "walk," Paul will apply to our walk before God later in his letter: "we also should **walk [peripateō 4043]** in newness of life" (6:4); "who **walk [peripateō 4043]** not after the flesh, but after the Spirit [*breath*]" (8:1,4); "Let us **walk [peripateō 4043] honestly**, as in the day" (13:13); "now **walkest [peripateō 4043]** thou not charitably" (14:15). It's also used many more times in the New Testament. The following are just some of many: "For we **walk [peripateō 4043]** by faith [*faithfulness*], not by sight" (2Co 5:7); "**Walk [peripateō 4043]** in the Spirit [*breath*], and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh" (Gal 5:16); "And **walk [peripateō 4043]** in love" (Eph 5:2); "That ye might **walk [peripateō 4043]** worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing" (Col 1:10); "That ye would **walk [peripateō 4043]** worthy of God" (1Th 2:12); "He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to **walk [peripateō 4043]**, even as he **walked [peripateō 4043]**" (1Jo 2:6); "And this is love, that we **walk [peripateō 4043]** after his commandments. This is the commandment, That, as ye have heard from the beginning, ye should **walk [peripateō 4043]** in it" (2Jo 1:6); "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children **walk [peripateō 4043]** in truth" (3Jo 1:4).

The day that was recorded in Genesis chapter 17 was a turning point in Abraham's life. God told him to "walk before me" (Gen 17:1), because he had been walking before people. His heart hadn't been right in God's sight. We know this because a little later when God revealed that his wife Sarah would have a son, Abraham laughed at God in his heart, "Then Abraham fell upon his face, and **laughed, and said in his heart**" (Gen 17:17). To laugh inside at God while talking with him shows Abraham wasn't consciously aware of Him knowing his every thought, motive, and imagination. We've all been guilty of laughing in our heart at someone while talking with them, yet keeping a straight face to hide it. Of course we can get away with this before people but not before God. This is the difference between walking before people and walking before God, and this is what Paul was teaching in his letter, "whose praise *is* not of men, but of God" (2:29).

Abraham learned that day how he must live to keep the commitment he had made to God, "And he believed [*committed*] in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness" (Gen 15:6). To remain committed to God's way of being right before Him, Abraham would now have to walk before Him with a pure heart. And this is the gospel message Jesus Christ Himself preached: "Blessed *are* **the pure in heart**: for they shall see God" (Mat 5:8); "That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath **committed adultery with her already in his heart**" (Mat 5:28); "For where your treasure is, **there will your heart be also**" (Mat 6:21); "**For out of the heart** proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies" (Mat 15:19).

To walk "**before him** whom he believed [*committed*]" (v. 17), is to be genuine, sincere, and true. Jesus taught that "the hypocrites" (Mat 6:2,5,16) walk before people—they do good things such as giving, praying, and fasting to be seen by them: "Take heed that ye do not your alms **before men, to be seen of them**" (Mat 6:1), "they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be **seen of men**" (Mat 6:5), "they disfigure their faces, that they may **appear unto men** to fast" (Mat 6:16). But those genuinely, sincerely, and truly walking before God, don't care that people see what they do but only that God sees, "**thy Father which seeth in secret** himself shall reward thee openly" (Mat 6:4,6,18).

Walking before Him with a pure heart has always been God's message to us in the Scriptures. Here are just a few of the many statements: "And GOD saw that the wickedness of man *was* great in the earth, and *that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was* only evil continually" (Gen 6:5); "for *the LORD seeth* not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but **the LORD looketh on the heart**" (1Sa 16:7); "**whose heart thou knowest**; (for thou, *even* thou only, **knowest the hearts of all the children of men**;)'" (1Ki 8:39); "serve him with a **perfect heart** and with a willing mind: for **the LORD searcheth all hearts**, and understandeth **all the imaginations of the thoughts**" (1Ch 28:9); "I **have walked before thee** in truth and **with a perfect heart**, and have done *that which is* good in thy sight" (Isa 38:3); "But have walked after **the imagination of their own heart**" (Jer 9:14); "but walked every one in **the imagination of their evil heart**" (Jer 11:8); "which walk in **the imagination of their heart**" (Jer 13:10); "ye walk every one after **the imagination of his evil heart**" (Jer 16:12); "every one that walketh after **the imagination of his own heart**" (Jer 23:17).

Abraham also learned that to "walk before me" (Gen 17:1), he would have to be in unity and agreement with God about everything, including His judgment upon Sodom and Gomorrah. When praying for his nephew Lot's deliverance, he distinguished the righteous from the wicked, "Wilt thou also destroy **the righteous with the wicked**? ... That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay **the righteous with the wicked**: and that **the righteous** should be as **the wicked**, that be far from thee: Shall not **the Judge [šāpaṭ 8199] of all the earth** do right?" (Gen 18:23,25). He agreed with God that the lifestyle of the men in Sodom and Gomorrah was wicked.

The men of Sodom tried to justify their sinful lifestyle by accusing Lot, “This one *fellow* came in **to sojourn**, and he will needs **be a judge [šāpaṭ 8199]**” (Gen 19:9). But those were simply blame-shifting tactics they wouldn’t have to admit their sinful lifestyle. These men were claiming that their way of life was simply the custom of the land while Lot was a sojourner among them trying to push his own personal convictions and values on them. Furthermore, they accused him of judging them. But this was simply a false accusation and another means of shifting the blame. Lot wasn’t their judge. As Abraham had said, “Shall not the **Judge [šāpaṭ 8199]** of all the earth do right?” God was their judge and ruled their actions as sinful against Him. Lot simply agreed with God and was delivered from His judgment on those cities.

Nowadays when people say “Don’t judge me” it’s a false accusation and means of deflecting the issue away from themselves and their sin. The truth is that God is our Judge, and we’re either with Him or against Him. We’re not judging anyone but simply agreeing with God’s judgment. Another tactic is that people portray themselves as loving others, while those against sinful actions are supposedly hating others. But it’s just another false accusation to shift blame away from themselves. It’s not loving others to approve of the sinful actions that are tearing apart families, hurting children, and demoralizing the very fabric of humanity God established. It’s those standing for the truth that are truly loving others.

This all goes back to Paul’s earlier point, “who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that **those who practice such things are deserving of death**, not only do the same **but also approve of those who practice them**” (1:32 NKJV). Paul said that those approving of sinful practices—even though they don’t practice such things themselves—are just as deserving of God’s judgment as those practicing them. They’re not part of the solution but part of the problem. Why do they approve of their practices? Paul will teach later in his letter, “present your bodies **a living sacrifice** ... be not **conformed to this world**” (12:1,2). People aren’t willing to sacrifice themselves for the sake of others. They agree with sin out of self-preservation, thereby contribute to the spread of depravity in the world. They’re not separate from the world but conformed to it.

Abraham had to become complete

“(As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed [*committed unto*], *even* God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were” (v. 17). Abraham’s walk before God included being perfect, “walk before me, and **be thou perfect**” (Gen 17:1). Now, being perfect has nothing to do with absolute perfection like God Himself. Our English word “perfect” isn’t the best means of expressing the intended message. The gospel message Jesus Christ Himself preached in His Sermon on the Mount is, “Be ye therefore **perfect [teleios 5046]**, even as your Father which is in heaven is **perfect [teleios 5046]**” (Mat 5:48). The Greek adjective *teleios* and its verb form *teleioō* mean “complete,” “finished,” or “mature.” Jesus used this same word when telling a man how to be complete in what he lacked, “The young man saith unto him, All these things have I kept from my youth up: **what lack I yet?** Jesus said unto him, **If thou wilt be perfect [teleios 5046]**, go *and* sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come *and* follow me.” (Mat 19:20-21). And He used it for Himself finishing the work He was sent to do, “My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and **to finish [teleioō 5048] his work**” (Jhn 4:34). It carries the idea of completing what’s lacking, or finishing what’s remaining.

When Jesus said “Be ye therefore **perfect [teleios 5046]**, even as your Father which is in heaven is **perfect [teleios 5046]**” (Mat 5:48), it was in context of what “the scribes and Pharisees” (Mat 5:20) had been telling God’s people, “Ye have heard that **it hath been said**, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and **hate thine enemy**”

(Mat 5:43). But Christ was now telling them, **“But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you”** (Mat 5:44). What the scribes and Pharisees had been saying about God’s commandment of love wasn’t perfect or complete because it didn’t include loving our enemies. But Jesus defined **“Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself”** in its completeness—it’s showing love to everyone the same regardless. It’s complete **“even as”** God’s love is complete, **“Be ye therefore perfect [teleios 5046], even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect [teleios 5046]”** (Mat 5:48). In what way is God’s love complete? He gives the sun and rain to everyone without discrimination, **“for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust”** (Mat 5:45).

This is what James meant by **“Every good gift and every perfect [teleios 5046] gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning”** (Jas 1:17). The Father’s love is complete and without variableness in shining the sun. He doesn’t turn sunlight away from the evil and unjust, leaving their crops in the shadows to wither and die. James calls this the **“complete”** law, **“the perfect [teleios 5046] law of liberty”** (Jas 1:25), which he later defines as **“Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself”** (Jas 2:8). The law of **“love thy neighbor as thyself”** is complete by showing the same love to enemies as with friends like God is shining the sun on the evil and the good.

John taught the same, **“But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected [teleioō 5048]”** (1Jo 2:5), **“If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected [teleioō 5048] in us”** (1Jo 4:12), **“Herein is our love made perfect [teleioō 5048], that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect [teleios 5046] love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect [teleioō 5048] in love.”** (1Jo 4:17-18). Twice John said **“God is love”** (1Jo 4:8,16), then drew the correspondence **“as he is, so are we in this world”** (1Jo 4:17). And this is what Jesus taught, **“Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.”** We’re going to be judged by the commandment **“Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.”** Christ’s teaching is so that **“our love is made perfect”** or complete **“that we may have boldness in the day of judgment.”** Therefore, if we’re showing the same love to everyone without discrimination or favoritism, we won’t fear the day of judgment, **“Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment.”**

After he was told to **“walk before me, and be thou perfect”** (Gen 17:1), Abraham became complete in his love by serving strangers passing by, **“three men stood by him: and when he saw them, he ran to meet them from the tent door, and bowed himself toward the ground, And said, My Lord, if now I have found favour in thy sight, pass not away, I pray thee, from thy servant”** (Gen 18:2-3). The great patriarch Abraham didn’t call his own servants to serve them, but served them himself, **“Let a little water, I pray you, be fetched, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree: And I will fetch a morsel of bread, and comfort ye your hearts; after that ye shall pass on: for therefore are ye come to your servant. And they said, So do, as thou hast said.”** (Gen 18:4-5). He then ran to do these things with help from Sarah and a young man, **“And Abraham ran unto the herd, and fetcht a calf tender and good, and gave it unto a young man; and he hasted to dress it. And he took butter, and milk, and the calf which he had dressed, and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree, and they did eat.”** (Gen 18:7-8). While these strangers were resting and eating under a shade tree, Abraham stood by as their servant.

Now, some might argue that Abraham knew all along that these three men were angels and therefore gave them this special treatment. However, the writer of Hebrews reminded us to **“Be not forgetful to entertain**

strangers: for thereby some have **entertained angels unawares**" (Heb 13:2). Of course this isn't necessarily referring to that event with Abraham, yet isn't ruling it out either. That Abraham didn't know these three men were angels is evident by Lot not knowing it either. Two of the three came to Sodom later, "And **the men** turned their faces from thence, and **went toward Sodom**" (Gen 18:22), "And there came **two angels** to Sodom at even" (Gen 19:1). The men of Sodom thought they were men, "Where **are the men** which came in to thee this night?" (Gen 19:5), and so did Lot, "only unto **these men** do nothing" (Gen 19:8).

God raises the dead

"(As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed [*committed unto*], **even God, who quickeneth [zōopoieō 2227] the dead**, and calleth those things which be not as though they were" (v. 17). The Greek verb *zōopoieō* means "to give life," "to make alive," or "to restore to life." The statement "God, who quickeneth the dead," refers to two events: giving life to the dead reproductive systems of Abraham and Sarah, "his own body now dead ... the deadness of Sara's womb" (v. 19), and giving life to Isaac, "as good as dead" (Heb 11:12), "raise *him* up, even from the dead" (Heb 11:19).

Abraham had committed himself to God, and these two events in particular tested his commitment. It's easy to remain committed when everything is under control and going as planned. Abraham wanted an heir, "Behold, to me thou hast given no seed: and, lo, one born in my house is mine heir" (Gen 15:3), and Ishmael fulfilled his hope. Abraham was satisfied and content at that point. However, his hope was now being redirected which required him to trust God, "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding" (Pro 3:5). God created all life and all reproductive systems. Therefore, God and only God can restore reproductive systems and raise the dead back to life. For Abraham to continue being deemed right before God and to have the heir he desired, he would now have to trust God to do what only God could do.

Against his hope of Ishmael, he committed his hope to Isaac

"Who **against hope believed [committed] in hope**, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, **So shall thy seed be**" (v. 18). God promised to Abraham, "he that shall come forth **out of thine own bowels** shall be thine heir ... **So shall thy seed be**" (Gen 15:4,5), and Abraham committed himself to what God promised, "And he **believed [committed] in the LORD**; and he counted [*deemed*] it to him for righteousness" (Gen 15:6). Of course he then considered this promise to have been fulfilled in Ishmael coming from out of his own bowels through Hagar, "And Hagar bare Abram a son: and Abram called his son's name, which Hagar bare, Ishmael" (Gen 16:15). But God's promise "So shall thy seed be," was intended all along to be fulfilled in a son coming from out of his own bowels through his wife Sarah, "And I will bless her, and give thee a son also of her" (Gen 17:16).

Turning his hope of an heir away from Ishmael to a son he would have from Sarah wasn't going to be easy. It's easy to stay committed when everything is going well, but true commitment is tested when the going gets rough. Being committed to this new hope couldn't be done secretly but had to be openly before the world. Abraham and all the men of his house had to be circumcised as a sign or token of his commitment before God, "**And all the men of his house**, born in the house, and bought with money of the stranger, **were circumcised with him**" (Gen 17:27). No doubt Abraham became the laughingstock of the land wherever he went. Everyone

knew he was now committed to the impossibility of having a son from Sarah—being 100 himself and her 90 having never bore a child even when she was young. It took humility for him to become the object of ridicule.

Abraham and Sarah both had to learn to change what they had been saying to themselves in their hearts, “Abraham fell upon his face, and **laughed, and said in his heart**” (Gen 17:17), “Therefore Sarah **laughed within herself, saying**” (Gen 18:12). And this is the gospel message Jesus Christ Himself preached. In just one chapter of Scripture from Luke, Christ said several times, “take ye no thought” (Luk 12:11), “he thought within himself, saying ... And I will say to my soul” (Luk 12:17,19), “Take no thought for your life ... which of you with taking thought” (Luk 12:22,25), “But and if that servant say in his heart” (Luk 12:45). We all talk to ourselves in our hearts, and of course God hears every bit of it. To “Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding” (Pro 3:5), we must change what we’ve been saying to ourselves in our hearts. We can’t be planning our financial future, trying to figure out solutions to our petty problems, or thinking evil thoughts to ourselves about others.

Paul will state later in his letter, “Say not in thine heart” (10:6), then quote from Deuteronomy 30:12-14. Moses’ last words to Israel in Deuteronomy, “These *be* the words” (Deu 1:1), can be summarized in the First and Great Commandment, “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God *is* one LORD: And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might” (Deu 6:4-5). And loving God with all our hearts consists of what we’re saying to ourselves in our hearts: “If thou shalt say in thine heart” (Deu 7:17); “And thou say in thine heart” (Deu 8:17); “Speak not thou in thine heart” (Deu 9:4); “Beware that there be not a thought in thy wicked heart, saying” (Deu 15:9); “he bless himself in his heart, saying” (Deu 29:19).

Abraham had a rude awakening when after secretly laughing at God in his heart, “Then Abraham fell upon his face, and **laughed, and said in his heart**” (Gen 17:17), found out that it wasn’t secret to God at all. This was just one of many things he found, “**Abraham** our father, as pertaining to the flesh, **hath found?**” (v. 1). God’s response, “Sarah thy wife shall **bear thee a son indeed;** and thou shalt **call his name Isaac [yīṣḥāq 3327]**” (Gen 17:19), startled Abraham with the reality that God knew he didn’t trust His ability to do what He had just said. God’s reply assured Abraham that he truly would have a son from Sarah, and that he must name him after his own action of laughter. The Hebrew word *yīṣḥāq* means “he laughs.” Therefore, him becoming “a father of many nations,” could only come through “he laughs,” the name of his son in fulfillment of God’s promise. Every night for many years he had been looking toward heaven and telling the stars that his heir would be like them, “**Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars,** if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, **So shall thy seed be**” (Gen 15:5). And once his heir finally came, every time he called him by name, he would be calling him after his own action of laughter.

Like Abraham, God’s people must change their hope

“Who **against hope believed [committed] in hope,** that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, **So shall thy seed be**” (v. 18). Abraham’s two sons were figurative of the Old and New Covenants to come, “But **he who was of the bondwoman** was born after the flesh; but **he of the freewoman** was by promise. Which things are **an allegory:** for these are **the two covenants**” (Gal 4:23-24). That Abraham “against hope believed [committed] in hope,” is that he turned away his hope of Ishmael being his heir, and committed his hope of an heir from Sarah. And the message to God’s people is contained in these events allegorically—they must turn their hope away from the Old Covenant, and to the New Covenant through God’s Son Jesus Christ.

Moses prophesied of a particular unfaithful generation of God's people, "They have corrupted themselves, their spot is not *the spot* of his children: **they are a perverse and crooked generation**" (Deu 32:5), "I will hide my face from them, I will see what their end *shall be*: for **they are a very froward generation**, children in whom is **no faith [faithfulness]**" (Deu 32:20). It was the generation that personally witnessed and rejected God's own Son, "O faithless [*unfaithful*] and perverse generation" (Mat 17:17; Luk 9:41), "O faithless [*unfaithful*] generation" (Mar 9:19). Had they been committed and faithful to God as Abraham was, upon hearing the Son of God Himself and witnessing His miracles, they would have turned their hope away from Ishmael (the Old Covenant) and to Isaac (the New Covenant).

Many times Jesus Christ derided that generation: "But whereunto shall I liken this generation?" (Mat 11:16); "An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign" (Mat 12:39); "The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it ... The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it" (Mat 12:41,42); "A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign" (Mat 16:4); "All these things shall come upon this generation" (Mat 23:36); "Why doth this generation seek after a sign?" (Mar 8:12); "Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation" (Mar 8:38); "Whereunto then shall I liken the men of this generation?" (Luk 7:31); "This is an evil generation: they seek a sign" (Luk 11:29); "For as Jonas was a sign unto the Ninevites, so shall also the Son of man be to this generation" (Luk 11:30); "The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with the men of this generation ... The men of Nineve shall rise up in the judgment with this generation" (Luk 11:31,32); "That the blood of all the prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation ... It shall be required of this generation" (Luk 11:50,51); "But first must he suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation" (Luk 17:25).

It was because of the unfaithfulness of God's people that Jesus couldn't do miraculous works in some places, "**And he could there do no mighty work**, save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folk, and healed *them*. And he marvelled because of their **unbelief [unfaithfulness]**" (Mar 6:5-6). But when Jesus did heal people, it was in response to their faithfulness: "I have not found so great **faith [faithfulness]**, no, not in Israel" (Mat 8:10); "And, behold, they brought to him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed: and Jesus seeing their **faith [faithfulness]** said unto the sick of the palsy; Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee" (Mat 9:2); "Daughter, be of good comfort; thy **faith [faithfulness]** hath made thee whole" (Mat 9:22); "Then touched he their eyes, saying, According to your **faith [faithfulness]** be it unto you" (Mat 9:29); "O woman, great is thy **faith [faithfulness]**: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour" (Mat 15:28).

Abraham wasn't weak but strong in his commitment

"And **being not weak in faith [commitment, faithfulness]**, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sara's womb: He staggered [*diakrinō* 1252] not at the promise of God through unbelief [*unfaithfulness*]; **but was strong in faith [commitment, faithfulness], giving glory to God**" (vs. 19-20). Paul now teaches that Abraham wasn't weak in his commitment to God but was strongly committed to Him. It's strong commitment that glorifies God—being committed and submitted to Him as the God of our lives.

God told Abraham that He would be his God, and the God of His seed that would come after him, “And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, **to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee.** And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and **I will be their God.**” (Gen 17:7-8). He said to Abraham, “**to be a God unto thee**” (Gen 17:7); to Isaac, “*I am* the God of **Abraham** thy father” (Gen 26:24); to Jacob, “*I am* the LORD God of **Abraham** thy father, and the God of **Isaac**” (Gen 28:13); to Moses, “*I am* the God of thy father, the God of **Abraham**, the God of **Isaac**, and the God of **Jacob**” (Exo 3:6); to His people, “*I am* the LORD **thy God**, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage” (Exo 20:2).

As the God of Abraham’s seed, “**to be a God** unto thee, and **to thy seed** after thee ... I will be **their God**” (Gen 17:7,8), they could have no other gods before Him: “Thou shalt have **no other gods before me**” (Exo 20:3; Deu 5:7); “**make no mention of the name of other gods**, neither let it be heard out of thy mouth” (Exo 23:13); “And it shall be, if thou do at all forget the LORD thy God, and **walk after other gods, and serve them, and worship them**, I testify against you this day that **ye shall surely perish**” (Deu 8:19); “Take heed to yourselves, that your heart be not deceived, and ye turn aside, and **serve other gods, and worship them**” (Deu 11:16); “And thou shalt not go aside from any of the words which I command thee this day, *to* the right hand, or *to* the left, **to go after other gods to serve them**” (Deu 28:14); “But if thine heart turn away, so that thou wilt not hear, but shalt be drawn away, and **worship other gods, and serve them**; I denounce unto you this day, that ye shall surely perish” (Deu 30:17-18).

The only gospel message by which we’re saved is the message God preached to Abraham, “And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen [*ethnos* 1484] through faith [*commitment, faithfulness*], **preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying**, In thee shall all nations [*ethnos* 1484] be blessed” (Gal 3:8). It’s the message that the God of Abraham’s seed, “**to be a God** unto thee, and **to thy seed** after thee ... I will be **their God**” (Gen 17:7,8), would be the God of all people through Christ, “And if ye **be Christ’s**, then are ye **Abraham’s seed**” (Gal 3:29). Salvation is ultimately about the one true God being the God of our lives, which was true of God’s people under the Old Covenant and also of His people under the New.: “I will be their God” (Gen 17:8; Jer 24:7, 31:33, 32:38; Eze 11:20, 36:28, 37:23,27; Zec 8:8); “I will be their God” (2Co 6:16); “I will be to them a God” (Heb 8:10); “God is not ashamed to be called their God” (Heb 11:16); “they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, *and be* their God” (Rev 21:3); “I will be his God, and he shall be my son” (Rev 21:7).

Now that the New Covenant has come, it’s only those submitted to God’s Son that are His people. If we’re obeying the commandments of His Son Jesus Christ and living by the truth He taught, then we can trust God to provide, protect, defend, and save us from sin and death. The Jewish people want to submit to the true God as their God but don’t want His Son as their Savior. Gentiles, on the other hand, want God’s Son as their Savior but don’t want to submit to the true God as their God. However, God is only our God when we submit to His Son, and His Son is our Savior only when His God is our God. It’s because “the only true God” (Jhn 17:3) is Jesus Christ’s God, “I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and **to my God, and your God**” (Jhn 20:17), that submitting to Jesus Christ as Lord doesn’t break God’s commandment, “Thou shalt have no other gods before me” (Exo 20:3; Deu 5:7). For God to be our God, His Son’s God must be our God, and God’s Son must be our Lord.

Faithfulness pleases God

The writer of Hebrews taught, “But **without faith [commitment, faithfulness] it is impossible to please him:** for he that cometh to God must **believe [commit] that he is,** and *that* he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him” (Heb 11:6). What pleases God is being committed and faithful to Him—this is what Hebrews chapter 11 is all about, “Now **faith [commitment, faithfulness]** is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For **by it** the elders **obtained a good report [martyreō 3140]**” (Heb 11:1-2). The Greek verb *martyreō* is “to bear record,” “to report,” “to testify,” or “to witness” something. It’s by faithfulness to God that the elders or forefathers obtained a good report, testimony, or witness from God Himself that they pleased Him: “**By faith [commitment, faithfulness] Abel** offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which **he obtained witness [martyreō 3140]** that he was righteous, **God testifying [martyreō 3140] of his gifts:** and by it he being dead yet speaketh” (Heb 11:4), “**By faith [commitment, faithfulness] Enoch** was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation **he had this testimony [martyreō 3140], that he pleased God**” (Heb 11:5). By recording these events in the Scriptures, God bore witness that what pleased Him was their faithfulness to Him.

It wasn’t just Abel and Enoch that pleased God by their faithfulness, but everyone listed in this chapter: “By faith [commitment, faithfulness] Noah” (Heb 11:7); “By faith [commitment, faithfulness] Abraham” (Heb 11:8); “Through faith [commitment, faithfulness] also Sarah” (Heb 11:11); “By faith [commitment, faithfulness] Isaac” (Heb 11:20); “By faith [commitment, faithfulness] Jacob” (Heb 11:21); “By faith [commitment, faithfulness] Joseph” (Heb 11:22); “By faith [commitment, faithfulness] Moses” (Heb 11:23). “And **these all,** having obtained a good report [martyreō 3140] through faith [commitment, faithfulness]” (Heb 11:39).

When he said “for he that cometh to God must **believe [commit] that he is**” (Heb 11:6), it’s that we must commit to Him as our God. When we’re not ashamed of Him as our God, upholding our commitment in faithfulness to Him, then He is not ashamed to be called our God, “God is not ashamed to be called their God” (Heb 11:16). This is what Abraham did, “Abraham believed [committed unto] God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness” (v. 3), “And being not weak in faith [commitment, faithfulness], ... but was strong in faith [commitment, faithfulness], giving glory to God” (vs. 19,20), “**By faith [commitment, faithfulness] Abraham,** when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, **obeyed; and he went out,** not knowing whither he went. **By faith [commitment, faithfulness] he sojourned** in the land of promise, as *in* a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise” (Heb 11:8-9).

“But without faith [faithfulness] *it is* impossible to please *him:* for he that cometh to God must believe [commit] that he is, and *that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him*” (Heb 11:6). Abraham lifted up his hand to the Lord in commitment to Him, “**I have lift up mine hand unto the LORD,** the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth” (Gen 14:22), “**And he believed [committed] in the LORD;** and he counted it to him for righteousness” (Gen 15:6). And the Lord declared that He would be his protector and provider, “Fear not, Abram: I *am* thy **shield,** and thy exceeding great **reward**” (Gen 15:1). Abraham was now committed to seeking reward from God by faithfulness to Him, “he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him” (Heb 11:6), “By faith [faithfulness] Abraham” (Heb 11:8).

This is the gospel message Paul preached, and what he taught to the Romans, “Who will **render** to every man according to his **deeds [actions]:** To them who by **patient continuance in well doing seek** for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life” (2:6-7), “In the day when God shall judge the **secrets [kryptos 2927]** of men by

Jesus Christ **according to my gospel**" (2:16), "But he *is* a Jew, which is one **inwardly [kryptos 2927]**; and circumcision *is that* of the heart, in the spirit, *and* not in the letter; **whose praise is not of men, but of God**" (2:29). That "he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him," is that He "will **render** to every man according to his deeds [*actions*]; To them who by **patient continuance in well doing seek.**" Those that diligently seek reward from Him, He will render to them. And this is the gospel message Jesus Christ Himself taught: "That thine alms may be **in secret [kryptos 2927]**: and **thy Father** which seeth in secret himself shall **reward thee openly**" (Mat 6:4); "But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is **in secret [kryptos 2927]**; and **thy Father** which seeth in secret shall **reward thee openly**" (Mat 6:6); "That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is **in secret [kryptos 2927]**: and **thy Father**, which seeth in secret, shall **reward thee openly**" (Mat 6:18).

When the true God is truly our God, we diligently seek reward from Him only. We sincerely don't care if anyone but God sees the good actions we're doing because we don't want reward from people but from God. This is what Abraham found, "What shall we say then that **Abraham** our father, as pertaining to the flesh, **hath found?**" (v. 1). He learned that God was glorified and pleased by him remaining strongly committed to Him as his God, "And being not weak in faith [*commitment, faithfulness*] ... but was strong in faith [*commitment, faithfulness*], giving glory to God."

Abraham didn't contend with God

"He **staggered [diakrinō 1252] not at the promise of God** through unbelief [*unfaithfulness*]; but was strong in faith [*commitment, faithfulness*], giving glory to God" (v. 20). The Greek verb *diakrinō* means "to argue with" or "to contend with" as in, "And when Peter was come up to Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision **contended [diakrinō 1252] with him**" (Act 11:2), "Yet Michael the archangel, when **contending [diakrinō 1252] with** the devil he disputed about the body of Moses" (Jde 1:9). Paul was recounting Abraham's response to hearing God's promise that his wife Sarah would have a son, "And I will bless her, and **give thee a son also of her**" (Gen 17:16), that initially he *did* contend with God, "And Abraham said unto God, **O that Ishmael might live before thee!**" (Gen 17:18). He didn't want to forsake his comfortable and convenient hope in Ishmael to begin hoping for something he didn't even think was possible, plus bring him public ridicule in the process. However, he stopped contending and quickly submitted by being circumcised later that same day, "In the selfsame day was Abraham circumcised, and Ishmael his son" (Gen 17:26).

James taught that those contending with God are like a wave of the sea, driven up and down, and one way or another, by the wind, "But let him ask in faith [*faithfulness*], **nothing wavering [diakrinō 1252]**. For he that **wavereth [diakrinō 1252] is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed**. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord. A **double minded [dipsychos 1374] man is** unstable in all his ways." (Jas 1:6-8). They're not strongly committed to God but unstable, vacillating, and wavering.

James depicted them as "double minded" because their minds aren't fully committed to God in agreement with Him. The Greek adjective *dipsychos* is derived from the adverb *dis* for "two" and noun *psychē* for "life" or "soul." It's literally someone living a double-life, a hypocrite! They're pretenders—appearing to be in unity with God while actually disagreeing with Him.

This word is found only one other place in Scripture and it's later in James' letter, "Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse *your* hands, ye sinners; and **purify your hearts, ye double minded [dipsychos**

1374]” (Jas 4:8). Their hearts aren’t pure. Jesus Christ Himself taught, “Blessed *are* the **pure in heart**: for they shall see God” (Mat 5:8). And He described hypocrites: “Therefore when thou doest *thine* **alms**, do not sound a trumpet before thee, **as the hypocrites**” (Mat 6:2); “And when thou **prayest**, thou shalt not be **as the hypocrites**” (Mat 6:5); “Moreover when ye **fast**, be not, **as the hypocrites**” (Mat 6:16). Hypocrites have impure motives in their hearts for the good things they do. They do good, not because they truly love God and people, but because they want some form of glory for themselves.

Those living a double-life, hypocrites, appear to be right with God—agreeing with Him, obeying Him, and submitting to Him. However, they’re actually uncommitted, unstable, and wavering. They’re contentious. They have a divisive spirit about them and argue with others because they argue with God! They’re not broken in breath, fearing God and what He said: “The LORD *is* nigh unto them that are of a **broken heart**; and saveth such as be of a **contrite spirit [breath]**” (Psa 34:18); “The sacrifices of God *are* a **broken spirit [breath]**: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise” (Psa 51:17); “Better *it is to be* of a **humble spirit [breath] with the lowly**, than to divide the spoil with the proud” (Pro 16:19); “A man’s pride shall bring him low: but honour shall uphold **the humble in spirit [breath]**” (Pro 29:23); “I dwell in the high and holy *place*, with him also *that is* of a **contrite and humble spirit [breath]**, to revive the spirit [*breath*] of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones” (Isa 57:15); “to this *man* will I look, *even to him that is* **poor and of a contrite spirit [breath]**, and trembleth at my word” (Isa 66:2); “Blessed *are* **the poor in spirit [breath]**: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Mat 5:3).

The Son of God on this earth was in complete and perfect unity with His Father. Contending with God’s Son is tantamount to contending with God Himself because everything His Son said is what He had been sent by His Father to say. His words are God’s words. Therefore, anyone contending with anything the Son of God taught, doesn’t have God, “Whosoever **transgresseth**, and abideth not in **the doctrine of Christ, hath not God**. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son” (2Jo 1:9). Trinitarian ministers teaching co-equality between the Father and the Son, are contending with what the Son of God taught about God and about Himself. And John said that anyone transgressing the teaching of Christ doesn’t have God.

To be right with God like Abraham was, we must be strongly committed to God like Abraham was, “And he believed [*committed*] in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness” (Gen 15:6). We can’t contend or argue with God and still be right with Him. And Abraham didn’t just come to agreement with God about his heir but about everything God told him, including His judgment upon Sodom and Gomorrah.

Abraham didn’t contend with God about sin but agreed with Him. He acknowledged that his nephew Lot was living righteously while the homosexuals among whom he dwelt were living wickedly, “Wilt thou also destroy **the righteous with the wicked?**” (Gen 18:23), “That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay **the righteous with the wicked**: and that **the righteous** should be as **the wicked**, that be far from thee: Shall not **the Judge of all the earth** do right?” (Gen 18:25). Peter said the same, “And delivered **just Lot**, vexed with the filthy conversation of **the wicked**: (For that **righteous man** dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed *his righteous soul* from day to day with *their* unlawful deeds;)” (2Pe 2:7-8). And Abraham wasn’t their judge, God is, “**the Judge** of all the earth.” To be right with God, we must be in unity with His judgment upon the wicked.

Laying with the same-sex and cross-dressing are abominations to God: “Thou shalt not **lie with mankind, as with womankind**: it *is* **abomination**” (Lev 18:22); “If a man also **lie with mankind, as he lieth with a woman**, both of them have committed an **abomination**: they shall surely be put to death; their blood *shall be* upon

them” (Lev 20:13); “The woman shall not **wear that which pertaineth unto a man**, neither shall a **man put on a woman’s garment**: for all that do so *are* **abomination unto the LORD thy God**” (Deu 22:5). Since these things are “abomination unto the LORD **thy God**,” then to be our God, these things must also be an abomination to us.

It’s because Abraham was living righteously before God in faithfulness and agreement with Him, that God answered his prayers, “So **Abraham prayed unto God**: and God healed Abimelech, and his wife, and his maidservants; and they bare *children*” (Gen 20:17). This is what Jesus Christ Himself taught, “If ye have **faith [commitment, faithfulness], and doubt [diakrinō 1252] not**, ye shall not only do this *which is done* to the fig tree, but also if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; it shall be done. And all things, whatsoever ye shall **ask in prayer, believing [committing]**, ye shall receive.” (Mat 21:21-22). And this is what James taught, “But **let him ask in faith [commitment, faithfulness], nothing wavering [diakrinō 1252]**. For he that **wavereth [diakrinō 1252]** is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For **let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord**” (Jas 1:6-7). Like Abraham, “He **staggered [diakrinō 1252] not** at the promise of God through unbelief [*unfaithfulness*]; but was strong in faith [*commitment, faithfulness*], giving glory to God” (v. 20), when we’re committed and faithful to God, not contending with Him about anything but agreeing with Him about everything, we’re glorifying Him, and He will hear and answer our prayers.

Sarah became committed

Abraham’s wife Sarah was very beautiful, “Behold now, I know that thou *art* **a fair woman to look upon** ... the Egyptians beheld the woman that **she was very fair**” (Gen 12:11,14). It was because of her beauty that Abraham felt compelled to pose as brother and sister wherever they went, “Therefore it shall come to pass, when the Egyptians shall see thee, that they shall say, This *is* his wife: and **they will kill me, but they will save thee alive**. Say, I pray thee, thou *art* my sister: that it may be well with me **for thy sake**; and my soul shall live because of thee.” (Gen 12:12-13). And this was ultimately for her sake not his because if he was killed, she would be taken by someone else.

It wasn’t just her own natural beauty that was causing them problems but also that she was doing them no favors by adorning herself outwardly, “**Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning** of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel ... **Even as Sara obeyed Abraham**, calling him lord” (1Pe 3:3,6). She liked getting attention for her beauty, therefore she focused on her outward appearance before people. But things began to turn after she was caught laughing in her heart at God then lying about it, “Therefore **Sarah laughed within herself, saying**, After I am waxed old shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also? ... Then **Sarah denied, saying, I laughed not**; for she was afraid. And he said, Nay; but thou didst laugh” (Gen 18:12,15). This was the beginning of learning her priority—that it shouldn’t be her outward appearance before people but her heart inwardly before God, “Whose adorning **let it not be that outward adorning** of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; But **let it be the hidden man of the heart**, in that which is not corruptible, *even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit [breath]*, which is **in the sight of God** of great price” (1Pe 3:3-4).

Sarah finally listened to Abimelech, King of Gerar. When Abraham and Sarah came to Gerar, they once again posed as brother and sister, “**And Abraham said of Sarah his wife, She is my sister**: and Abimelech king of Gerar sent, and took Sarah” (Gen 20:2). But God told Abimelech the truth, “But God came to Abimelech in a

dream by night, and said to him, Behold, thou *art but* a dead man, for the woman which thou hast taken; for **she is a man's wife**" (Gen 20:3). Abimelech later exhorted Sarah, "Behold, I have given thy brother a thousand *pieces* of silver: behold, **he is to thee a covering of the eyes**, unto all that *are* with thee, and with all *other*: **thus she was reproved**" (Gen 20:16). That Abraham "*is to thee a covering of the eyes*" is that since he is her husband, other men shouldn't be looking at her. She wasn't to be adorned in any way that tempted other men's eyes but to be properly covered. She repented and committed her priority to "adorning" her heart before God's eyes. And soon after that, she became pregnant with Isaac.

Abraham deemed God as able

"And being **fully persuaded** that, what he had promised, **he was able [dynatos 1415] also to perform**" (v. 21). Abraham initially laughed at the promise because he didn't think God was able to give him a son from his wife Sarah, "Then Abraham fell upon his face, and laughed, and said in his heart" (Gen 17:17). And Sarah later laughed as well, "Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, After I am waxed old shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?" (Gen 18:12). But God reprimanded them, "**Is any thing too hard for the LORD?** At the time appointed I will return unto thee, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son" (Gen 18:14).

Abraham eventually deemed God as able to open Sarah's womb and give them a son in their old age, "**he was able [dynatos 1415] also to perform.**" Likely one thing that helped convince him was that God demonstrated His ability to close and open the wombs of every young lady in Abimelech's house, "So Abraham prayed unto God: and God healed Abimelech, and his wife, and his maidservants; and they bare *children*. **For the LORD had fast closed up all the wombs of the house of Abimelech**, because of Sarah Abraham's wife." (Gen 20:17-18). Furthermore, years later Abraham also deemed God as able to save his son Isaac from death, "By faith [*commitment, faithfulness*] Abraham ... **Accounting [logizomai 3049] that God was able [dynatos 1415] to raise him up**, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure." (Heb 11:19).

God continued to deem Abraham as righteous

"And therefore it was imputed [*deemed*] to him for righteousness" (v. 22). At this point late in the chapter, Paul draws his conclusion from the Scripture he quoted toward the beginning of the chapter, "For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed [*committed unto*] God, and it was counted [*deemed*] unto him for righteousness" (v. 3). Although this statement about Abraham being deemed was recorded in Genesis 15 when God promised him an heir from his own bowels, "he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir ... And he believed [*committed*] in the LORD; and he counted [*deemed*] it to him for righteousness" (Gen 15:4,6), Paul concluded his deeming based on his committed actions recorded after Genesis 17. It was in Genesis 17 that Abraham was told Sarah would bear his heir, "And I will bless her, and give thee a son also of her ... Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed" (Gen 17:16,19). And Paul concluded his deeming based on his committed trust in God's ability to fulfill it, "he considered not **his own body now dead**, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet **the deadness of Sara's womb** ... And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, **he was able also to perform**. And **therefore it was imputed [deemed] to him for righteousness.**" (Rom 4:19,21-22). Therefore, Abraham being deemed righteous by God wasn't a "one-and-done" event but continued—God continued to deem Abraham righteous as he continued in his commitment.

James concluded similarly as Paul. He cited the event of Abraham offering his son Isaac in Genesis 22, and declared it as the fulfillment of the Scripture recorded back in Genesis 15, “Was not Abraham our father **justified by works [actions]**, when he had **offered Isaac his son upon the altar?** ... And **the scripture was fulfilled** which saith, Abraham **believed [committed unto] God**, and it was **imputed [deemed] unto him for righteousness**” (Jas 2:21,23). That “the scripture was fulfilled” isn’t in the sense of a prophecy being fulfilled. It’s that Abraham’s actions in Genesis 22 was the fruit of the commitment he made to God back in Genesis 15. Because he made that commitment to God back then, he remained faithful to God in obeying whatever he was told, “because thou hast obeyed my voice” (Gen 22:18). That he was “justified by works [actions]” is that his continued committed actions justified what had been said of him, “And he believed [committed] in the LORD; and he counted [deemed] it to him for righteousness” (Gen 15:6).

God had promised Abraham, “he that shall come forth **out of thine own bowels** shall be thine heir ... Look now toward heaven, and **tell the stars, if thou be able to number them:** and he said unto him, **So shall thy seed be**” (Gen 15:4-5). And it was with the purpose of realizing this promise that Abraham committed himself to God, “And he believed [committed] in the LORD; and he counted [deemed] it to him for righteousness” (Gen 15:6). But keeping his commitment wouldn’t be easy. He had to patiently endure for many years until the greatest and final test of his commitment, “And it came to pass after these things, that **God did tempt [test] Abraham**” (Gen 22:1). Therefore, Abraham’s commitment to the promise of his seed being innumerable like the stars, “the stars, if thou be able to number them ... So shall thy seed be,” was proven in this final test, “That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will **multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven**, and as the sand which *is* upon the sea shore; and **thy seed** shall possess the gate of his enemies; And in **thy seed** shall all the nations of the earth be blessed” (Gen 22:17-18).

God’s promise “So shall thy seed be” (Gen 15:5), depended upon Abraham keeping his commitment to God, “And he believed [committed] in the LORD” (Gen 15:6). And because he stayed faithful to his commitment through this greatest test, God’s promise from this point forward would depend upon His commitment to Abraham, “**By myself have I sworn**, saith the LORD, for **because thou hast** done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only *son* ... **because thou hast** obeyed my voice” (Gen 22:16,18). Because Abraham remained faithful to God, God now swore His faithfulness to Abraham. And as Abraham didn’t withhold his son but gave him to God, God wouldn’t withhold His Son but would give Him to Abraham.

Abraham being deemed righteous by God wasn’t one-time event. He wasn’t deemed righteous simply by declaring his commitment but by continuing to keep his commitment he had declared. As long as he continued to be faithful to God, God continued to deem him righteous. Hypothetically, what would have happened had Abraham failed the greatest test of his commitment in Genesis 22? Should we suppose God would have told him, “That’s okay, it was only a test. No big deal!” Of course not! It’s understood that at any point had Abraham ceased from his commitment to God, God would have ceased from deeming Abraham as righteous before Him.

God giving His Son, “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son” (Jhn 3:16), depended upon Abraham’s obedience in giving his son, “**because thou hast** done this thing ... **because thou hast obeyed** my voice.”. Had Abraham disobeyed, then nobody including Abraham would be saved. Abraham’s salvation depended upon staying committed, faithful, and obedient to God, and so does ours.

It was written for us also

“Now it was not written **for his sake alone**, that it was imputed [*deemed*] to him” (v. 23). What was written about Abraham, “And he believed [*committed*] in the LORD; and he counted [*deemed*] it to him for righteousness” (Gen 15:6), wasn’t so that we could say, “What a lucky guy!” It was written to teach us about how he was deemed righteous so we can follow his example and also be deemed righteous. Paul will state later in his letter, “For whatsoever things were **written aforetime were written for our learning**, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope” (15:4).

Abraham being deemed righteous by God certainly involved him having faith and believing. But what was written about him for our learning was his commitment, faithfulness, fear of God, obedience, submission, and trust. And his commitment and faithfulness to God was proved and tested, “God did **tempt [nāsâ 5254] Abraham**” (Gen 22:1). God’s people, Abraham’s seed, were deemed righteous in the same way and were also proved or tested many times: “And he cried unto the LORD; and the LORD shewed him a tree, *which* when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet: there he made for them a statute and an ordinance, and there **he proved [nāsâ 5254] them**” (Exo 15:25); “Then said the LORD unto Moses, Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day, **that I may prove [nāsâ 5254] them**, whether they will walk in my law, or no” (Exo 16:4); “And Moses said unto the people, Fear not: for **God is come to prove [nāsâ 5254] you**, and that his fear may be before your faces, that ye sin not” (Exo 20:20); “And thou shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, **and to prove [nāsâ 5254] thee**, to know what *was* in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no” (Deu 8:2); “Who fed thee in the wilderness with manna, which thy fathers knew not, that he might humble thee, and **that he might prove [nāsâ 5254] thee**, to do thee good at thy latter end” (Deu 8:16).

James taught that our actions show our commitment and faithfulness to God, “Thou hast faith [*commitment, faithfulness*], and I have works [*actions*]: **shew me** thy faith [*commitment, faithfulness*] **without thy works [actions]**, and I will **shew thee** my faith [*commitment, faithfulness*] **by my works [actions]**” (Jas 2:18). We have a saying nowadays along this same principle, “What you’re doing speaks so loudly that I can’t hear a word you’re saying.” It’s our actions—what we do and how we live—that show whether or not we’re truly committed to someone or something.

James’ prime example of actions are Abraham’s actions that day when God tested his commitment and faithfulness to Him, “Was not Abraham our father **justified by works [actions]**, when he had **offered Isaac his son upon the altar?**” (Jas 2:21). Having passed the test by obeying what God told him to do, the Messenger of the Lord said, “**for now I know** that thou fearest God” (Gen 22:12), “**because thou hast obeyed my voice**” (Gen 22:18). His obedient actions showed that he truly feared God.

This is what “justified by works [*actions*]” means. That “**the scripture was fulfilled** which saith, Abraham believed [*committed unto*] God, and it was imputed [*deemed*] unto him for righteousness” (Jas 2:23), is that what had been said of Abraham in Genesis 15 was justified in having been proved by Abraham’s actions in Genesis 22. It’s not that it was a fulfilled prophecy of what would happen in the future, but that it was justified in having been said of him because his later actions proved it out. He was “justified by works [*actions*]” in that his actions justified God deeming him righteous.

Although James' prime example of actions was the great father of God's people Abraham, his other example was the lowly Gentile prostitute Rahab, "Likewise also was not **Rahab the harlot justified by works [actions]**, when she had received the messengers, and had sent *them* out another way?" (Jas 2:25).

I know that the LORD hath given you the land, and that **your terror is fallen upon us**, and that all the inhabitants of the land **faint because of you**. For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red sea for you, when ye came out of Egypt; and what ye did unto the two kings of the Amorites, that *were* on the other side Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom ye utterly destroyed. And as soon as we had heard *these things*, **our hearts did melt**, neither did there remain **any more courage in any man**, because of you: for the LORD your God, he *is* God in heaven above, and in earth beneath. (Joshua 2:9-11)

Abraham's actions proved that he feared God, "for now I know that **thou fearest God**" (Gen 22:12), and so did Rahab's. Although everyone in the land fainted in terror 40 years earlier upon hearing what God did for His people, but only Rahab acted upon that fear to save herself and her household. She feared God more than the King of Jericho, therefore allied herself with God's people.

Like Abraham, Rahab was also "justified by works [actions]" because she feared God and acted accordingly. But unlike Abraham, nothing was said about her committing herself to God and therefore being deemed righteous by Him. This indicates that it's committed actions that justifies. It's not the pledge of commitment but the act of commitment.

Both Abraham and Rahab are also commended in Hebrews for their commitment and faithfulness to God, "By faith [commitment, faithfulness] **Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac**: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son" (Heb 11:17), "By faith [commitment, faithfulness] **the harlot Rahab perished not** with them that believed [committed] not, when she had received the spies with peace" (Heb 11:31). It was because of their committed and faithful actions that they received a good report from God recorded in the Scriptures, "Now faith [commitment, faithfulness] **is the substance** of things hoped for, **the evidence** of things not seen. For **by it** the elders obtained **a good report**" (Heb 11:1-2). Their actions gave substance or reality to what they hoped for. Abraham hoped for an heir, and his hope was realized by trusting God to "raise from the dead" his heir—raise Isaac to life from their dead reproductive systems, raise Isaac to life from the altar of sacrifice. Rahab hoped she wouldn't perish with everyone else in Jericho, and her hope was also realized by trusting God through helping His people conquer Jericho.

Our commitment and faithfulness will also be tested

"Now it was not written **for his sake alone**, that it was imputed [deemed] to him; **But for us also**, to whom it shall be imputed [deemed], if we believe [commit, trust] on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead" (vs. 23-24). God deemed Abraham righteous because he committed himself to Him. His commitment, however, had to be proved, "God did tempt [nāsâ 5254] Abraham" (Gen 22:1). And the same was true with God's people: "there he proved [nāsâ 5254] them" (Exo 15:25); "that I may prove [nāsâ 5254] them" (Exo 16:4); "God is come to prove [nāsâ 5254] you" (Exo 20:20); "to prove [nāsâ 5254] thee" (Deu 8:2); "that he might prove [nāsâ 5254] thee" (Deu 8:16). And the same will be proved of us, "Knowing *this*, that **the trying of your faith [commitment, faithfulness]** worketh patience" (Jas 1:2-3), "That **the trial of your faith**

[commitment, faithfulness], being much more precious than of gold that perisheth” (1Pe 1:6-7). God will prove, test, and try our commitment and faithfulness to Him.

God proving His people and recording those events in the Scriptures are examples for our learning and warning, “Now these things were **our examples**, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted ... Now all these things happened unto them **for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition**” (1Co 10:6,11). But Paul assured us that God won’t allow us to be tempted or tested beyond what we can handle, but will also provide a way out of it, “There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God *is* faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear *it*” (1Co 10:13). The Worldwide English version presents an interesting paraphrase, “No testing has come to you that other people do not have. But God will not fail you. He will not allow the testing to be too hard for you. No. When the testing comes, God will make a way out for you, so that you can go through the testing.” (Taken from THE JESUS BOOK - The Bible in Worldwide English. Copyright SOON Educational Publications, Derby DE65 6BN, UK.).

Job lived around the same time as Abraham, and we get a glimpse into God’s protection of him, “And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath *is* in thy power; **only upon himself put not forth thine hand**” (Job 1:12), “And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, he *is* in thine hand; **but save his life**” (Job 2:6). God doesn’t tempt anyone, “God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man” (Jas 1:13). Satan is the tempter. God allows but limits Satan’s evil activity in our lives to what we can bear. In Job’s case, God limited what was brought upon him, “only upon himself,” “but save his life.” In allowing but limiting temptations, it proves our commitment and faithfulness to Him, and also leaves us without excuse. We can never legitimately claim that we sinned because we just couldn’t handle the temptation. We’re always able to bear because God “will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able.”

The great test of Abraham’s commitment and faithfulness to God recorded in Genesis 22 came after many years of walking with God. Abraham wouldn’t have been able to endure such a great test years earlier. Likewise, when we pass smaller tests, God will allow greater tests. Jesus said, “He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much” (Luk 16:10). It’s by proving ourselves faithful in lesser things that we’re trusted with being faithful in greater things.

The promise God swore by Himself came after Abraham had patiently endured for about 25 years, “For when **God made promise to Abraham**, because he could swear by no greater, **he sware by himself**, Saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee. And so, **after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise.**” (Heb 6:13-15). And we must follow his example of patient endurance, “That ye be not slothful, but **followers** of them who through **faith [commitment, faithfulness] and patience** inherit the promises” (Heb 6:12). Jacob declared that his life on this earth had been a pilgrimage full of evil, “And Jacob said unto Pharaoh, The days of the years of **my pilgrimage** *are* an hundred and thirty years: **few and evil have the days of the years of my life been**, and have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of **their pilgrimage**” (Gen 47:9). And the years of his patient endurance through this life weren’t as many as his father Isaac and grandfather Abraham. They all patiently endured.

To be deemed righteous by God as Abraham was, our commitment and faithfulness to God must be proved and tested like his was. Are we going to stay committed to God even when we’re all alone, things are going all wrong, and it seems He isn’t there and doesn’t even care? Are we going to try and do things ourselves as god of our own lives, or trust Him to be the God of our lives? Are we going to keep enduring day after day through

the evil, and when it seems we're not accomplishing anything? It can get wearisome through continually doing good and seemingly getting no reward for it. But this is the constricted and afflicted way to eternal life, "Because **strait [constricted]** is the gate, and **narrow [afflicted]** is the way, which leadeth **unto life**, and few there be that find it" (Mat 7:14), "To them who by **patient continuance in well doing** seek for glory and honour and immortality, **eternal life**" (2:7).

Abraham was called the friend of God

"And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed [*committed unto*] God, and it was imputed [*deemed*] unto him for righteousness: and **he was called the Friend [philos 5384] of God**" (Jas 2:23). Abraham "was called the Friend [*philos 5384*] of God" by God Himself, "But thou, Israel, *art* my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of **Abraham my friend**" (Isa 41:8). It ultimately matters not that we call ourselves God's friend but that He calls us His friend. The adjective *philos* means "friend" as with the adjective *philadelphos* for "friendly brother" or "loving brother" used only this once in Scripture, "Finally, *be ye all of one mind*, having compassion one of another, **love as brethren [philadelphos 5361]**, *be pitiful, be courteous*" (1Pe 3:8). To be "of one mind" as a "loving brother" is to be in agreement and unity. Therefore, to be God's friend we must be in agreement and unity with Him, and not in contention with Him about anything.

James used *philos* and its noun form *philia* later in his letter, "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that **the friendship [philia 5373] of the world is enmity with God?** whosoever therefore will be **a friend [philos 5384] of the world is the enemy of God**" (Jas 4:4). He made the clear distinction with no gray area whatsoever that if we're a friend of the world, then we're God's enemy. And he used the Greek verb *epithymeō* for the actions of those that are friends of the world, "Ye lust [*epithymeō 1937*], and have not" (Jas 4:2). Christ used this word when commanding against immoral lust in the heart, "That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after [*epithymeō 1937*] her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart" (Mat 5:28), and Paul used it when quoting the Tenth Commandment, "Thou shalt not covet [*epithymeō 1937*]" (Rom 7:7,13:9).

To be called "My friend" by God as Abraham was, we must not be friends with the world. We must not covet or lust after anything that belongs to others, "**Thou shalt not covet** thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, **nor any thing that is thy neighbour's**" (Exo 20:17). Paul taught that this is accomplished by walking in the breath, "**Walk in the Spirit [breath], and ye shall not fulfil the lust [epithymia 1939] of the flesh.** For the flesh lusteth [*epithymeō 1937*] against the Spirit [*breath*], and the Spirit [*breath*] against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would." (Gal 5:16-17). The breath of God and the flesh are diametrically opposed. And the only way to overcome the flesh is by walking in the breath. When we focus on being a friend of God by always doing what pleases Him, we won't be lusting after the things of this world and won't be His enemy.

Commit to Him that raised Jesus from the dead

"But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed [*deemed*], **if we believe [commit, trust] on him** that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead" (v. 24). Paul will later write, "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt **believe [commit, trust]** in thine heart **that God hath raised him from the dead**, thou shalt be

saved” (10:9). The gospel message being preached today, on the other hand, is that if we’ll simply believe Christ’s resurrection happened as an actual event in history, we’ll be saved. And because of that message, innumerable numbers of sermons, books, and debates have been directed at giving solid evidence for Christ’s resurrection as the basis for faith and belief. Now, all of that evidence is certainly a good thing! But Paul wasn’t teaching that we’re saved by simply believing Christ is alive, but by committing ourselves to God that raised Him to life. Just believing some facts are true doesn’t save us—committing ourselves to God does.

Peter said, “Who by him do **believe [commit, trust] in God, that raised him up from the dead**, and gave him glory; that **your faith [commitment, faithfulness] and hope might be in God**” (1Pe 1:21). We must commit our trust in God to raise us from the dead as Christ Himself trusted God to raise Him from the dead. Paul quoted a prophecy from the Psalms, “I believed [*committed, trusted*], therefore have I spoken” (Psa 116:10), “We having the same spirit [*breath*] of faith [*commitment, faithfulness*], according as it is written, I believed [*committed, trusted*], and therefore have I spoken; **we also believe [commit, trust], and therefore speak**; Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus **shall raise up us also by Jesus**, and shall present *us* with you” (2Co 4:13-14). Christ committed Himself to His Father, trusting His Father to raise Him from the dead. Therefore, He spoke in His dying words, “**Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit [breath]**: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost [*exhaled*]” (Luk 23:46). As Christ spoke, committing His breath to His Father, we also speak, committing our breath to God’s Son, “And they stoned Stephen, calling upon *God*, and saying, **Lord Jesus, receive my spirit [breath]**” (Act 7:59).

Christ never tried to defend Himself but stayed quiet, committing His defense to God, “Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but **committed himself to him that judgeth righteously**” (1Pe 2:23). To be raised from the dead unto eternal life, we must commit ourselves to God as Christ committed Himself to God. It’s not just believing Christ was raised but committing our trust in God to raise us as He was raised, “if we believe [*commit, trust*] on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead.”

He was delivered for our offences

“Who was **delivered [paradidōmi 3860] for our offences**, and was raised again for our justification” (v. 25). The Greek verb *paradidōmi* means “to deliver” or “to give over into.” Judas Iscariot delivered Christ to the chief priests, “And **Judas Iscariot**, one of the twelve, went unto **the chief priests, to betray [paradidōmi 3860] him** unto them” (Mar 14:10). The chief priests delivered Christ to Pilate, “And straightway in the morning **the chief priests** held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council, and bound Jesus, and carried *him* away, and **delivered [paradidōmi 3860] him to Pilate**” (Mar 15:1). Pilate then delivered Christ to the soldiers to crucify Him, “And so **Pilate**, willing to content the people, released Barabbas unto them, and **delivered [paradidōmi 3860] Jesus**, when he had scourged *him*, **to be crucified**” (Mar 15:15). But Christ actually delivered Himself to them, “the Son of God, who loved me, and **gave [paradidōmi 3860] himself** for me” (Gal 2:20), “Christ also hath loved us, and hath **given [paradidōmi 3860] himself** for us an offering and a sacrifice to God” (Eph 5:2). Ultimately, God delivered Him, “He that spared not his own Son, but **delivered him up [paradidōmi 3860]** for us all” (8:32).

That Christ was delivered implies a sacrifice. Nobody took His life from Him but He laid it down willingly of Himself, “I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself” (Jhn 10:17,18). He sacrificed Himself for our sins: “he *was* wounded for our transgressions, *he was* bruised for our iniquities” (Isa 53:5); “the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all” (Isa 53:6); “for the transgression of

my people was he stricken” (Isa 53:8); “for he shall bear their iniquities” (Isa 53:11); “he bare the sin of many” (Isa 53:12); “to give his life a ransom for many” (Mat 20:28); “For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins” (Mat 26:28); “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (Jhn 1:29); “So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many” (Heb 9:28); “Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree” (1Pe 2:24); “For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust” (1Pe 3:18); “he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin” (1Jo 3:5).

Raised for our justification

“Who was delivered for our offences, and was **raised again for our justification**” (v. 25). Christ went to His death on the cross as the Lamb of God for our sins. His resurrection, however, was “for our justification.” Paul will write later, “**It is God that justifieth**. Who *is* he that condemneth? *It is* Christ that died, yea rather, that is **risen again**” (8:33-34). He was alluding to Isaiah’s prophecy, “I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting ... **He is near that justifieth me**; who will contend with me? let us stand together: who *is* mine adversary? let him come near to me.” (Isa 50:6,8). Christ trusted God to justify Him from the miscarriage of justice He endured. As Peter also wrote, “For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, **leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps** ... Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but **committed himself to him that judgeth righteously**” (1Pe 2:21,23). He committed Himself to God for justification from the false accusations railed against Him that condemned Him to death.

The stripes on His back, the plucking of His beard, the hitting and spitting on His face, was an example to us, “leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps.” That He was “raised again for our justification” (v. 25), is that His resurrection is the prototype of ours. We must also commit our trust in Him to raise us from the dead, “believe [*commit, trust*] on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead.” After Christ’s example, we must allow ourselves to be falsely accused, mocked, and even physically harmed while not trying to defend ourselves but loving our persecutors—forgiving them as Christ did, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Luk 23:34). We must trust our Father to justify us by submitting to His Son.